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Locating Margery Kempe

An Examination of the Meaning of Space and Sexuality in *The Book of Margery Kempe*

This article examines the use of space and the experience of sexuality in *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Initially looking at the "traditional" uses of space and the gendering of location and occupation, the article then looks in depth at how Kempe operates her piety spatially. In medieval culture femininity is associated with the untrustworthy body and so the female must be confined to the safe inner space while the masculine body is free to exist in the outer world. Margery Kempe resists this categorisation despite the abuse she receives from her community in Lynn and from others on pilgrimage. The article argues that the strong reaction received by Kempe to her voice and physical presence in the world is primarily a reflection of the attitude of the Church and lay community towards gender and female sexuality. The article also discusses the apparent sexual nature of Kempe's experiences and how the sexualisation of Kempe may reflect the space she chooses to occupy. The article argues that as a married woman who chooses to exercise her piety in a public sphere, Kempe comes up against challenges and has experiences which are largely unmatched in the lives of nuns or anchoresses who may be able physically to avoid worldly corruption after their enclosure.

Of all the medieval mystics studied today, the most difficult to locate is Margery Kempe.[1] Kempe does not reside in any of the places usually designated for women

1. For discussions of Kempe in relation to space, see Sarah Beckwith, "A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe," in *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages,* ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 195–215; Margaret Hostetler, " 'I Wold Thow Wer Closyd in an Hows of Ston': Re-Imagining Religious Enclosure in *The Book of Margery Kempe,*" *Parergon: Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 20.2 (2003) 71–94; Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 168–9; Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 7–8; McAvoy, " 'Closyd in an hows of ston': Discourses of Anchoritism and *The Book of Margery Kempe,*" in *Anchorites Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 182–94. My

The AnaChronisT 16 (Winter 2011): 1–17 ISSN 1219–2589 (print)

in the late Middle Ages. We do not find her confined to an anchorage, a nunnery, a marital bed or as a mourning widow. Kempe moves out of the space permitted for a married mother, and develops for herself a new sphere in which to operate her piety.[2] She uses the existing traditions of affective piety and compunction in an attempt to legitimise her position in society. I would argue that Kempe uses both of these devotional practices as a means to move from the home and marital bed into a wholly new sphere. This article examines the ways in which Kempe's spatial practices result in the liminal nature of her position within her society.[3] I will also discuss how the paradox of inner and outer, body and soul is dealt with by Kempe.

Theoretically, space in the Middle Ages was markedly defined.[4] Each space was clearly distinct as suitable for either men or women, with the inner and private spaces being most often the feminine and the outer and public remaining the domain of the masculine.[5] Lay women were expected to occupy domestic space – the home, bedroom and kitchen – while men's lives were conducted away from the home in the fields of the rural areas and the streets of the urban centres.[6] Traditionally one may have seen clearly the division of labour among the lower classes where women engaged in tasks which did not bring them into the public sphere, involving

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interest here is not so much in Kempe and anchoritism. Rather my focus is on Kempe's use of worldly space and how she portrays her position within the community.

2. For a discussion of women's liminality and rejection of allocated space, see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body,* pp. 3–8.

3. For a discussion of these issues in relation to the life of an anchoress, see *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure,* ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008).

4. Daphne Spain points out that space is ideological, not just physical; see Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

5. Salih has questioned how strictly space was divided by gender in practice; see Sarah Salih, "At Home Out of the House," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, ed. Caroline Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 124–40, p. 130. McAvoy has noted that Kempe's attempts at brewing and milling show how more options were becoming available to women, although a number of avenues did remain closed; see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, p. 96. The negative reaction of Kempe's community to her might suggest that these more masculine occupations were not yet acceptable for women.

6. The importance of domestic power to women is seen in Kempe's text in the relevance of having the buttery keys returned to her following her illness after the birth of her first child; see Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe,* ed. Sanford B. Meech and Hope Emily Allen (London: Early English Text Society, 1940 [reprint 1961]), p. 8. All further references to Kempe's text will be to this edition. This scene has been discussed by a number of critics; see, for instance, Salih, "At Home Out of the House"; Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 89.

them with domestic cleaning, cooking and washing.[7] Tellingly, that most transgressive of female occupations, prostitution, took place in that most private arena – the bedroom – but solicitation was conducted in public.[8]

Kempe's community express their desire for her to be removed from the world and enclosed. Kempe reports this wish when describing the reaction of the people of Canterbury to her weeping: "I wold þow wer closyd in an hows of ston þat þer schild no man speke wyth þe."[9] Kempe's response to this insult is to say that she is not the first of God's servants to suffer slander because of his name. Kempe cleverly shifts the focus from herself to God; her right to appear in public is aligned with Christ's. [10]

In their 2000 study *Medieval Practices of Space*, Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka argue that "the practice of space in the Middle Ages was never homogeneous, but always in flux, and depended on how its attributes were defined at the time and disseminated by the historical agents."[11] Hanawalt and Kobialka note that space in the Middle Ages falls into three distinct categories: geographical space and mapping, theological and ecclesiastical space, and space as a means to express belonging or position. One may relate all three of these areas to a study of Margery Kempe's use of space in her *Book*. Kempe's pilgrimages bring her through various geographical spaces and cultures and one may explore Kempe's use of these various spaces.[12] Her sense of displacement in her own country may be contrasted with the somewhat increased feeling of belonging she experiences while on pilgrimage.[13] As a pilgrim Kempe is harassed by her fellow countrymen and suffers because of their disapproval of her; however, she does not suffer the trials and imprison-

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7. Salih has noted that in medieval cultural tradition the house was the location of the "good wife" and that the Book of Proverbs defines female virtue and vice in terms of the domestic sphere; see Salih, "At Home Out of the House," p. 125.

8. For a discussion of Margery Kempe in relation to the discourse of prostitution, see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body,* pp. 96–130.

9. Kempe, p. 27.

10. McAvoy notes that this hostile reaction to Kempe comes as a result of her usurping male space and presuming she is fit to engage in discussion of God, again usually a male occupation; see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body,* pp. 7–8. See also McAvoy, "Closyd in an hows of ston."

11. "Introduction," in *Medieval Practices of Space,* ed. Barbara Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), ix–xviii, p. x.

12. On the tenuous position of the female mystic, see Susan S. Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety as Public Performance* (London: Routledge, 2000). For Morrison's discussion of Margery Kempe as a pilgrim, see *Women Pilgrims*, pp. 128–41.

13. For a discussion of Kempe's use of space when on pilgrimage, see Morrison, *Women Pilgrims*, pp. 128–41.

ments to which she is subjected at home.[14] She is given alms by a number of individuals and although she lacks financial means, she is cared for in a way that we do not see either in Lynn or anywhere else in England.[15]

Kempe's book also brings to light the interesting dynamics which existed within theological space, which was primarily a male and masculine sphere. Sarah Beckwith notes that Kempe refuses to occupy space traditionally associated with women. [16] I would argue that Kempe uses private space to perform publicly while practising private matters in what were considered public spaces. In the private space of her prison cell Kempe becomes a preacher and in the public space of the Church she expresses her personal devotion to Christ.[17] Kempe's inverted use of space brought her much slander and was yet another reason for the way she was displaced from her community.[18]

Margery Kempe's closest contemporary within the canon of English mystics, Julian of Norwich, represents the acceptable use of space for female piety in late medieval England. Julian was an anchoress; she lived a fully enclosed life. Attached to the Church of St. Julian in Norwich, her identity revolved fully around her inner life and this inner existence was the most acceptable expression of piety available to her.[19] The dynamics of space within the anchorhold is a subject which has been well explored but it is important to note a number of points for the current discussion.[20]

The anchorhold is the most internal and private space and in many ways mirrors the body of the anchoress who inhabits it.[21] As the funeral ceremony is cele-

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14. While in Rome, Kempe is asked to prove that her confessor can understand her but this does not arise in a formal setting but rather occurs while at a dinner; see Kempe p. 97.

15. See the numerous alms-givers who support Kempe while she is Rome; Kempe, pp. 92–93.

16. Sarah Beckwith, "A Very Material Mysticism," p. 37. Margaret Hostetler, in " 'I Wold Thow Wer Closyd in an Hows of Ston,' " claims that Kempe turned public places into performances of enclosure.

17. For Kempe preaching while imprisoned, see Kempe, pp. 130–31.

18. Salih has noted that the space Kempe occupies dictates the reactions of others around her, citing the positive reaction to Elizabeth of Spalbeck whose behaviour was similar to Kempe's – the obvious difference being that she was in an enclosed space; see Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, pp. 168–9.

19. While it is generally accepted currently that Julian was not the original name of this anchoress but rather that she took the name of the Church to which she was attached, E. A. Jones warns that we cannot take this fact for granted and more research is needed on the matter; see Jones, "Anchoritic Aspects of Julian of Norwich," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 75–87, pp. 76–77.

20. See *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold,* ed. McAvoy.

21. Here the anchoress as gender lies at the core of my argument. For a detailed discussion of anchoritism as well as its relationship to gender, see *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs*.

brated at the time that the anchoress enters the enclosure, one could say that the death involved is not only the removal of the person from the world but also the shedding of the physical body for the new spiritual body that the anchorhold represents. This may seem like a contradiction as the body is the outer and the soul the inner, while the gendering of spaces places the female in the private and the male in the public. However this spatial demarcation does make sense when we consider that the association of the body with the female may well be the cause of the female's position in the inner private space. The danger of the body is contained, allowing the soul to be free of temptation.

The anchorhold represents the safety of the virgin enclosed within it and Kempe's existence outside this enclosure is a source of danger to her, and danger posed by her. The relationship between this dangerous body and conversely safe soul in *The Book of Margery Kempe* is most effectively demonstrated in Kempe's search for a renewed virginity. By escaping the bedroom, Kempe simultaneously liberates and incarcerates herself by moving into a space which allows her freedom in her piety but forces her into emotional and psychological exile from her community.[22]

Kempe's exile from her community begins in the text with the illness she suffers following the birth of her first child. This illness is the direct result of a sin which Kempe says the devil fooled her into not confessing while she was well, and which she was unable to confess while ill because of the quick temper and judgement of her confessor. Kempe describes the effects of this unconfessed sin as devastating:

> And þan sche sent for hyr gostly fadyr, for sche had a thyng in conscyens whech sche had neuyr schewyd be-forn þat tyme in alle hyr lyfe. For sche was euyr lettyd by hyr enmy, þe Deuel, euyr-mor seyng to hyr whyl sche was in good heele hir nedyd no confessyon but don penawns be hir-self a-loone, & all schuld be forȝouyn, for God is mercyful j-now.[23]

Many critics have now come to the conclusion that this unnamed sin is of a sexual nature.[24] They often do so on the basis that Kempe periodically experiences

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22. McAvoy notes that Eve's words in the N-Town play *The Creation of the World: The Fall of Man* describe her desire to move beyond her allocated space; see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, p. 1. This is mirrored in Kempe's text as she too wishes to move away from her husband's side and into space she might create for herself. For a discussion of women's sexuality in the Middle Ages, see Roberta Bosse, "Female Sexual Behavior in the Late Middle Ages: Ideal and Actual," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 10 (1984) 15–37.

23. Kempe, pp. 6–7.

24. See, for example, McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, pp. 34–40; Hope Phyllis Weissman, "Margery Kempe in Jerusalem: *Hysterica Compassio* in the Late Middle Ages," in

sexual temptation.[25] However, there is insufficient evidence in the text to determine with certainty what the nature of this sin might have been; it may have been sexual but it could equally have been heresy or a number of other sins.[26] In fact I would argue that Kempe's omission of William Sawtrey from her text could be seen as evidence of her discomfort around the topic and, as is evident in the inclusion of the sexual temptation in the text, heresy is something she is far less prone to discuss than sexuality.[27]

In fact Kempe's rather open discussion of her sexual relationship with her husband and her description of her sexual temptation and her desire for a man who later refused her advances proves a willingness not only to discuss sex but also to admit to sexual sin as, if we follow Augustine's model, her desire for this man constitutes the sin of lechery even if the act did not take place. [28] Kempe sees the temp-

Acts of Interpretation: The Text in Its Contexts 700–1600, ed. Mary Carruthers and Elizabeth Kirk (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1982), 201–17, p. 208. Salih argues that Kempe's text becomes the confession she was unable to make to her confessor; however, this argument is problematic as the sin is also not confessed within the text; see Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, p. 180.

25. McAvoy, for example, argues that the sin may be deemed sexual because of the juxtaposition of the sin and Kempe's expression of desire to be free from her husband. McAvoy sees Kempe's potential adultery as a type of confession in the text, noting that in psychoanalytic theory the subject often repeats a negative experience. McAvoy also sees the length of Kempe's illness as evidence of a sexual sin as it mirrors the term of a pregnancy. See McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, pp. 34–36.

26. It has been posited that the nature of this unspoken sin was heresy; see Stephen Medcalf, "Inner and Outer," in *The Later Middle Ages,* ed. Stephen Medcalf (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 108–71, pp. 116–17; Charity Scott Stokes, "Margery Kempe: Her Life and the Early History of Her Book," *Mystics Quarterly* 25 (1999) 9–67, p. 25. Kim M. Philips points out that if the sin was Lollard sympathies the desire not to identify it specifically could easily be explained; see Philips, "Margery Kempe and the Ages of Women," in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 17–34, p. 30. McAvoy notes that Kempe's desire to deal with the sin alone reflects the heretical belief that confession to a priest was unnecessary; see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, p. 37, n. 30. Staley argues that by Kempe saying it was the devil's will that she deal with her sin herself rather than confessing she depicts herself as orthodox early on. Staley also notes that this scene is used as a criticism of those members of the clergy who did not properly administer the sacrament of confession. See Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*, pp. 90–91.

27. McAvoy notes Sawtrey may well have had an influence on Kempe especially with regard to her confessional practices and her choice to record her accusations of Lollardy and Arundel's subsequent approval of her; see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, p. 35 and pp. 182–85.

28. Lochrie discusses Kempe's sexual temptation as a source of laughter and comedy in the text as she argues that punishment by lechery is comic for the medieval reader. Lochrie cites

tations she experiences as a punishment for believing that she loved God more than he loved her.[29] Surely if this punishment was meted out in response to her unmentioned sin, then Kempe would tell her reader.

The sexual nature of Kempe's temptations may well reflect her position as wife to a living husband and the need she experienced to fulfil her marital debt to him. As a married woman who chooses to exercise her piety in a public sphere, Kempe comes up against challenges and has experiences which are unmatched in the lives of nuns or anchoresses who may be able physically to avoid worldly corruption after their enclosure. However, it would be wrong to assume that those who were enclosed did not experience their sexuality; these figures also used their sexuality but did so in a way which was more acceptable both to their own contemporaries and ours. Roberta Gilchrist has noted that

> through the processes of sexual denial and strict physical enclosure, the sexuality of medieval religious women was turned inside out: sexuality became an interior space, a place of elevated senses and ecstatic states of consciousness. Celibacy, enclosure and contemplation were the avenues through which religious women discovered an intense, profound desire for the suffering body of Christ.[30]

Margery Kempe too expressed a deep desire for the human Christ, often identifying with his suffering state. However, her lack of virginity makes her desire for Christ problematic in the eyes of her own community. Moreover, this lack of virginity is made starkly obvious by her living family and the need for a vow of chastity with her husband who still wishes Kempe to fulfil her marriage contract in the marital bed. Her refusal to live an enclosed existence means that she remains both wife and mother in the eyes of her community.

Chaucer's "Miller's Tale" as an example of this literary trope; see Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 152–56. However, I would argue that this assertion is largely flawed. Kempe's text as a whole at no point suggests that laughter is to be found in any instance of sexual indiscretion. There is an obvious difference between a text which sets out to be outlandish and comedic and one which sets out to give religious instruction; therefore, we cannot base an argument on an assumption that the results of two texts with such wildly differing motivations and readerships would somehow be mirrored.

29. See Kempe, pp. 13–14. Staley argues that these temptations represent Kempe's struggle against her own sexuality rather than any outside influence; see Staley, *Dissenting Fictions*, p. 92.

30. Roberta Gilchrist, "Unsexing the Body: The Interior Sexuality of Medieval Religious Women," in *Archaeologies of Sexuality*, ed. A. Schmidt and Barbara L. Voss (London: Routledge, 2000), 89–103, p. 89.

Kempe chooses to live in the world, to be spiritual lover and virgin as well as earthly wife and mother. This points to another important aspect of Kempe's text and person: her choices. Rather than accept the limits placed upon her as a married woman, Kempe merely sees these aspects of her life as things which she may choose to change or exploit for her own ends. She chooses to move within the masculine-dominated metaphorical and physical places in society and she chooses to put an end to her sexual contract with her husband. Kempe also decides not to dismiss her body as untrustworthy and negative and instead chooses to use it as a tool in her attempt to achieve her goals in piety and religiosity. Kempe uses her body, the site of her sins of pride, vainglory, avarice, gluttony and sexual pleasure with her husband, and transforms it into the site of her repentance as she suffers physically throughout the text in seeking forgiveness for her own sins and those of others.

Margery Kempe's marriage to the Godhead is significant for a number of reasons.[31] Here I will discuss its relevance to a bodily love for a corporeal Christ and the sensual and sexual language used to describe the "marriage bed" scene which follows the wedding ceremony:

> As þis creatur was in þe Postelys Cherch at Rome on Seynt Laterynes Day, þe Fadyr of Hevyn seyd to hir "Dowtyr, I am wel plesyd wyth þe in-asmeche as þu beleuyst in alle þe Sacramentys of Holy Chirche & in al feyth þat longith þerto, & specialy for þat þu beleuyst in manhode of my Sone & for þe gret compassyon þat þu hast of hys bittyr Passyon."[32]

In preparation for the proposal of marriage God tells Kempe that he is happy with her for many reasons but most of all he is pleased that she believes in the manhood of Jesus Christ. At this stage we are reminded that it is Kempe's love of the corporeal Christ that has given her access to the heavenly sphere and the presence of the Godhead:

> Also þe Fadyr seyd to þis creatur, "Dowtyr, I wil han þe weddyd to my Godhede, for I schal schewyn þe my preuyteys & my cownselys, for þu xalt wonyn wyth me wyth-owtyn ende." Þan þe creatur kept sylens in hir sowle & answeryd not þerto, for sche was ful sor aferd of þe Godhede, for al hir

31. For a discussion of Kempe's marriage compared to the spiritual marriage of St. Bridget of Sweden, see Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, "Margery Kempe's Mystical Marriage and Roman Sojourn: The Influence of St. Bridget of Sweden," *Reading Medieval Studies* 28 (2002) 39–57. It should be noted that the mystical marriage was, of course, not uncommon in descriptions of medieval mystical experiences.

32. Kempe, p. 86.

> lofe & al hir affeccyon was set in þe manhode of Crist & þerof cowde sche good skylle & sche wolde for no-thyng a partyd þerfro.[33]

Kempe's reluctance to accept the proposal of the father because of her love for the son is further evidence that Kempe's physical devotion to the incarnate Christ is all consuming. Kempe attempts to rationalise her reaction by explaining the extreme nature of her devotion to the manhood of Christ:

> Sche was so meche affectyd to þe manhode of Crist þat whan sche sey women in Rome beryn children in her armys, ȝyf sche myth wetyn þat þei wer ony men children, sche shuld þan cryin, roryn, & wepyn as þei sche had seyn Crist in hys childhode. And, yf sche myth an had hir wille, oftyntymes sche wolde a takyn þe childeryn owt of þe moderys armys & a kyssed hem in þe stede of Criste. And ȝyf sche sey a semly man, sche had gret peyn to lokyn on hym les þan sche myth a seyn hym þat was boþe God and man. & þerfor sche cryed many tymes & oftyn whan sche met a semly man & wept & sobbyd ful sor in þe manhod of Crist as sche went in þe stretys at Rome þat þei þat seyn hir wondryd ful mych on hir, for þei knew not þe cawse. & þerfor it was no wondyr ȝyf sche wer stille & answeryd not þe Fadyr of Hevyn whan he teld hir þat sche xuld be weddyd to hys Godhed.[34]

Kempe loves both the child and adult corporeal Christ. It would seem that all masculine beauty reminds her of him and she weeps profusely because of it. The fierce loyalty which Kempe feels towards Christ may be strengthened because she is alone in a foreign country with no male companion. She is certainly familiar with the meaning of the Holy Trinity, and this is not an issue as the passage goes on to discuss Christ as the second member of it before she agrees to the marriage:

> Than seyd þe Secunde Persone, Crist Ihesu, whoys manhode sche louyd so meche, to hir, "What seyst þu, Margery, dowtyr, to my Fadyr of þes wordys þat he spekyth to þe? Art þu wel plesyd þat it be so?" And þan sche wold not answeryd þe Secunde Persone but wept wondir sor, desiryng to haue stille hym-selfe & in no wyse to be departyd from hym. Than þe Secunde Persone in Trinite answeryd to hys Fadyr for hir & seyde, "Fadyr, haue hir excused, for sche is ȝet but ȝong & not fully lernyd how sche xulde answeryn." And þan þe Fadyr toke hir be þe hand in hir sowle be-for þe Sone & þe Holy Gost & þe Modyr of Ihesu and alle þe xij apostelys & Seynt Kateryn & Seynt Margarete & many oþer seyntys & holy virgynes wyth gret

33. Kempe, p. 86.
34. Kempe, pp. 86–87.

> multitude of awngelys, seying to hir sowle, "I take þe, Margery, for my weddyd wife, for fayrar, for fowelar, for richer, for powerar, so þat þu be buxom & bonyr to do what I byd þe do. For, dowtyr, þer was neuyr childe so buxom to þe modyr as I xal be to þe boþe in wel & in wo, – to help þe and comfort þe. And þerto I make þe suyrte." And þan þe Modyr of God & alle þe seyntys þat wer þer present in hir sowle preyde þat þei myth haue mech joy to-gedyr. And þan þe creatur with hy deuocyon, wyth gret plente of treys, thankyd God of þis gostly comfort, heldyng hir-self in hir owyn felyng ryth vnworthy to any swech grace as sche felt, for sche felt many gret comfortys, boþe gostly comfortys & bodily comfortys.[35]

This wedding scene conforms closely to the traditional wedding scene between man and woman and lacks the formality of the wedding ceremony that would have taken place at the vow taking in a nunnery.[36] As with a traditional wedding the guests come to congratulate Kempe and these heavenly figures take the place of the friends and family who would attend nuptials. In fact these guests are noted as being "þer present in hir sowle." This demarcation of Kempe's soul not only as a place of experience but also as a commodious quasi-three-dimensional arena in which a rather large number of other figures may congregate shows the ease with which Kempe exploits her understanding of both her body and soul; the rhetorical transition between, and combination of, the physical and the spiritual is achieved with no fuss or worry as Kempe is comfortable with this dynamic body/soul relationship.

The differentiation here between the experience of body and soul is particularly interesting. When discussing Christ, Kempe does not specify whether his words or actions are heard or felt bodily or in her soul. However, when she moves on to discuss her interaction with the Godhead she qualifies her statements, describing her experience of the Godhead as "in hir sowle." The vows she exchanges with God, his holding of her hand, the wedding ceremony and the comforts she receives directly from the first person of the trinity are described in this way. The "bodily" comforts which Kempe receives once she has become a bride of Christ must be differentiated from those experiences which involve direct contact with the Godhead. Evidently, for Kempe, Christ – God Incarnate – is bodily, physical, and of this world, while God the father is spiritual, ghostly and heavenly.

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35. Kempe, p. 87.

36. For a detailed discussion of the medieval wedding ceremony, see D. L. D'Avray, *Medieval Marriage: Symbolism and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 141–56. On the nun's entrance ceremony, see Susan McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 37–40.

The multivalent relationship depicted between the Godhead and Kempe reflects the variety of ways in which the intensity of their connection is felt by her. The marriage vows exchanged in this scene include the usual spousal references but God also refers to both himself and Kempe as "buxom" or obedient children. God notes that following their marriage Kempe will be more obedient and he in turn will be more "buxom" than any child ever was to their mother. Kempe's use of multi-directional parental and spousal relationships to express extremity of feeling and passion is yet another indicator of the freedom she feels within her relationship with Christ.

Following the ceremony Kempe is filled with joy and describes the sweet heavenly odours, heavenly music and sights of angels she experienced:

> Sum-tyme sche felt swet smellys with hir nose; it wer swettar, hir thowt, þan euyr was ony swet erdly thing þat sche smellyd be-forn, ne sche myth neuyr tellyn how swet it wern, for hir thowt sche myth a leuyd þerby ȝyf they wolde a lestyd. Sum-tyme sche herd wyth hir bodily erys sweche sowndys & melodijs þat sche myth not wel heryn what a man seyd to hir in þat tyme les he spoke þe lowder. Þes sowndys & melodijs had sche herd nyhand euery day þe terme of xxv ȝere whan þis boke was wretyn, & specialy whan sche was in deuowt prayer, also many tymes whil sche was at Rome & in Inglond boþe. Sche sey wyth hir bodily eyne many white thyngys flying al a-bowte hir on euery syde as thykke in a maner as motys in the sunne.[37]

Kempe experienced these anomalies in a number of diverse places and their presence, as they appear only after the marriage, may serve to remind Kempe continually of her position as Bride of Christ. Once again Kempe's experience is described as "bodily" both in terms of her sight and hearing; there is no mistaking the ways in which she felt the effects of her piety. While one could argue that she merely uses the word "bodily" to emphasis the intensity of her experience we have seen that she does differentiate between those actions which are bodily and those which occur in the soul. For Kempe her spiritual experiences lead to a physical, corporeal understanding of mysticism and specifically of Christ.

I will now move on to discuss the scene which has sparked so much controversy in many discussions of Kempe. As Christ speaks to Kempe following their marriage he speaks of the ways in which their relationship is both natural and mutually pleasing:

> And, ȝyf I wer in erde as bodily as I was er I deyd on þe Cros, I schuld not ben a-schamyd of þe as many oþer men ben, for I schuld take þe be þe hand a-mongs þe pepil & make þe gret cher þat þei schuldyn wel knowyn

37. Kempe, pp. 87–88.

> þat I louyd þe ryth wel. For it is conuenyent þe wyf to be homly wyth hir husbond. Be he neuyr so gret a lorde & sche so powr a woman whan he weddyth hir, ȝet þei must ly to-gedir & rest to-gedir in joy & pes. Ryght so mot it be twyx þe & me, for I take non hed what þu hast be but what þu woldist be. And oftyn-tymes haue I telde þe þat I haue clene forȝoue þe alle thy synnes. Þerfore most I nedys be homly wyth þe & lyn in þi bed wyth þe. Dowtyr thow desyrest gretly to se me, & þu mayst boldly, whan þu art in þi bed, take me to þe as for þi weddyd husbond, as thy derworthy derlyng, & as for thy swete sone, for I wyl be louyd as a sone shuld be louyd wyth þe modyr & wil þat þu loue me, dowtyr, as a good wife owyth to loue hir husbonde. & þerfor þu mayst boldly take me in þe armys of þi sowle & kyssen my mowth, myn hed, & my fete as swetly as thow wylt. &, as oftyn-tymes as þu thynkyst on me er woldyst don any good dede to me, þu schalt haue þe same mede in Heuyn as ȝyf þu dedist it to myn owyn precyows body whech is in Heuyn, for I aske no mor of þe but þin hert for to louyn me þat louyth þe, for my lofe is euyr redy to þe.[38]

When Christ says that he would gladly walk with Kempe among people in the streets unashamed, there is a note of defiance. It would seem that in composing these words Kempe is expressing condemnation of those who found her behaviour humiliating and disgraceful. Christ takes on the role of husband or lover to Kempe, acting as both protector and defender. He goes on to say that it is befitting for a husband to be familiar with a wife. It is at this stage in the text that Christ tells Kempe that he wishes to know her as a husband would: in the marital bed.

Christ informs Kempe that her desire to see his body will be fulfilled when she takes him as her husband in bed.[39] Doubleness in language and meaning arises when in the same sentence Christ refers to himself as Kempe's son and to Kempe as his daughter. Is Kempe's text sexualising her relationship with Christ or is she merely trying to express an intensity of feeling through the language familiar to her?[40] There are strong connections with the Song of Songs especially in the refer-

38. Kempe, p. 90.

39. Staley discusses the insertion of "ghostly" before "bed" by one of the text's annotators of the surviving manuscript of the text. She argues that the language must have disturbed the later reader; see Staley, *Dissenting Fictions*, p. 95.

40. The practice of putting into words that which is ultimately ineffable is reflected on by a number of medieval mystics. The use of earthly images to describe a heavenly experience is seen as limited and frustrating by the mystics. They often also recognise the danger of using such language. In the Prologue to *The Cloud of Unknowing* the author issues a warning to readers: those who do not understand mystical experience should not read the text because they will almost certainly misunderstand its meaning. For a discussion of this warning see

ence to kissing Christ's mouth, head and feet. The language here is certainly sexual, as is the language in the Song of Songs.[41] However the sexuality in Kempe's text is calm and peaceful and describes marital sexual serenity rather than an excited passionate encounter.[42]

We may compare the passage above with a passage from Mechthild's *Flowing Light of the Godhead*, in which the Lord tells her to remove her clothes as

> Nothing shall come between them:
> Then a blessed stillness
> That both desire comes over them.
> He surrenders himself to her,
> And she surrenders herself to him.[43]

This passage is filled with a passion and directness not found in Kempe's text which in comparison is revealed to be a slow-paced example of a sensual companionship rather than a passionate tryst as described by Mechthild. Perhaps Mechthild's passion and physical desires are made safer for the reader through their metaphoricity and the delivery of the scenes in the third person. Margery Kempe's text is presented most often as if literal and always as a somewhat more personal account, so we cannot claim the same safety for her. However, much like the encounters described by Bernard in his commentary on the Song of Songs, Kempe's marriage to Christ is depicted as occurring in the soul, as was her experience of him in the marital bed.

McAvoy argues that Christ's ravishment of Kempe represents, to Kempe herself, absolution and is in opposition to what amounts to the marital rape carried out by her husband.[44] I would agree that Kempe's sensual experience with Christ repre-

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Evelyn Underhill, "Introduction," in *The Cloud of Unknowing: A Book of Contemplation* (London: J. M. Watkins, 1956), 1–12, p. 4.

41. For a discussion of the language of the Song of Songs and Kempe's text, see Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, pp. 225–27.

42. Here I concur with Salih who has recently argued that those texts which discuss and depict sexual pleasure, such as fabliaux, romance and allegorical texts, are very different from Kempe's text; see Sarah Salih, "When Is a Bosom Not a Bosom? Problems with 'Erotic Mysticism,' " in *Medieval Virginities*, ed. Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans and Sarah Salih (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 14–32, p. 17. Staley also refers to Kempe's text as "rather a tame story" when considered with other holy figures; see Staley, *Dissenting Fictions*, p. 101.

43. Mechthild of Magdaberg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, ed. and trans. Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 44.

44. See Liz Herbert McAvoy, "Spiritual Virgin to Virgin Mother: The Confessions of Margery Kempe," *Parergon: Bulletin of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 17.1 (1999) 9–44, p. 26.

sents a type of salvation; here she is removed from those sexual encounters which have plagued her and instead she becomes part of a mystical union with her true lover, Christ. This scene represents far more than a sexual encounter; it is the physical expression of Kempe's spiritual progression and her desire to depart from her physical family and to replace it with those biblical figures with whom she surrounds herself in her visions.

Kempe's text is full of dualisms: she is at once mother and virgin, parent and child, follower and leader, student and teacher, weeper and comforter, servant and master, flesh and spirit. She used the power of her body to position herself in a new and quite unusual sphere. She moved away from the enclosed space which so many religious women of the Middle Ages occupied. Rather than live in an unexposed and relatively safe space Kempe existed in the world – a space usually acceptable only for men. To move into this space she used her body by choosing affective piety to express her religiosity. Her affective piety of course included her gift of tears. While tears may be perceived as a private form of expression, they are one of the most commonly recognised forms of the outward expression of emotion. The act of weeping therefore brings together the private with the public and may be seen as an act of exposing what is inner. Her tears and affective piety also worked to move Kempe not only into the worldly sphere but into a dangerous position within that sphere; by forcing her community to acknowledge her existence Kempe opens herself up to slander, abuse and questions from her contemporaries regarding the authenticity of her tears and piety as a whole.

It is interesting to note also that both the act of weeping and the issue of sexuality not only move Kempe into a worldly position but also push her closer to a comparison with the most controversial biblical figure, Mary Magdalene. In many ways we could liken Kempe's quest to escape the bedroom with Mary Magdalene's spiritual rebirth, transforming each from a sexual to a "pure" being. The Magdalene, however, whose position as commercial prostitute was assumed by readers rather than stated in the Bible, represents the redeemed sexual woman, while Kempe does not appear as a reborn individual, but is rather, for a significant part of her own community, a failed wife and mother.

Kempe fears rape when away from her husband and the safety of her domestic domain.[45] The household was the only location in which a secular woman could safely escape the scrutiny and sexual advances of men as the mere act of being seen and desired constituted a sinful act on the part of a woman. Kempe's position as a

45. *Ancrene Wisse* uses the example of Dina whose departure from her house invites the threat of rape; see *The Ancrene Riwle,* ed. and trans. M. B. Salu (New York: Burns and Oats, 1955), p. 24.

wife and mother – a figure already sexualised – also represented in the culture of the time a danger of rape or sexual assault. Salih has noted that in the texts of the Katherine group sexualised torture was carried out on transgressive women who had already become sexual beings while the torture of virgins was not sexualised.[46]

While the house represented a safe haven it still offered some potential for misappropriation of space. The eroticisation of the window in medieval literature provides an interesting example of how women might express transgressiveness even within sanctioned space. The window becomes a possible place of breech of a woman's contract of either marriage of chastity.[47] It also appears as a site of danger and transgression in *The Book of Margery Kempe*.[48] During her imprisonment at Beverly, Kempe preaches through her window to a group of women who have gathered to show their support:

> Þan stode sche lokyng owt at a wyndown, telling many good talys to hem þat wolde heryn hir, in so mech þat women wept sor & seyde wyth gret heuynes of her hertys, "Alas, woman, why xalt þu be brent?" Than sche preyid þe good wife of þe hows to ȝeuyn hir drynke, for sche was euyl for thryste. And þe good wife seyd hir husband had born a-wey þe key, wherfor sche myth not comyn to hir ne ȝeuyn hir drynke. And þan þe women tokyn a leddyr & set up to þe wyndown & ȝouyn hir a pynte of wyn in a potte & toke hir a pece, besechyng hir to settyn a-wey þe potte preuyly & þe peve þat what þe good man come he myth not aspye it.[49]

This window becomes a passage of exchange between these women: Kempe imparts her knowledge of God and gives the women tears of devotion and they, in turn, give Kempe sustenance. The window is still a site of transgression as the women must hide their actions from the male figure of authority.

In many ways this scene encapsulates the meaning of space for Kempe. That place which offers the most potential for sin becomes a site of penitence giving instead the opportunity for repentance and salvation to those willing to listen and engage with her. Rather than offering sexual transgression, as the window did in

46. See Sarah Salih, "Performing Virginity: Sex and Violence in The Katherine Group," in *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity*, ed. Cindy L. Carlson and Jane Angela Weisl (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 95–112, p. 104.

47. For discussion of the window's erotic potential, see Salih, "At Home: Out of the House," pp. 131–32.

48. McAvoy discusses Kempe preaching from the window, noting the resemblance of the scene, which she argues is feminised, to one of Mary Magdalene preaching while in Gaul; see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, pp. 193–34.

49. See Kempe, pp. 130–31.

other texts, here it is transformed into an important place of opportunity for Kempe's words and her followers' devotion. This transformation of a site of potential transgression reflects her desire to change from a sexual being to a virginal Bride of Christ. For Kempe this transformation is a long journey which, I would argue, ends with the death of her, now infantile, husband.[50] As John Kempe's mental age diminishes so too does Kempe's position as earthly wife as her role becomes that of a nurturing mother rather than a sexual partner.

Kempe's description of her own body as the simultaneous site of sin, repentance, punishment and reward remains focused on her corporeality and her connection to the physical rather than spiritual world. The female medieval body is possibly one of the most interesting that history has to offer; medieval women mystics were public figures (none more so than Kempe) but medieval society preferred to keep women inside their prescribed space within homes, convents and brothels. Women's bodies were seen as dangerous to men who categorised themselves as beings of mind or soul.[51] However, Laurie Fink has noted that "the discourse of the female mystic was constructed out of disciplines designed to regulate the female body, and it is, paradoxically, through these disciplines that the mystic consolidated her power . . . [and] fashioned . . . the means of transcending [her] . . . own secondariness."[52] Thus Kempe uses the methods recommended in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* to empower herself, although this text was not written specifically for women.[53] Her visions of Jesus Christ move her into the mystical sphere, and, further, her use of her body becomes legitimised, for herself, through the use of her existing resources as a wife and mother.[54] She uses the language of the body to discuss her relationship with God, culminating in sharing a marital bed with Christ following her marriage to the Godhead in Rome.

Kempe's text also reflects the cultural "trustworthiness" of the woman and her body. Historically women, and especially their bodies, have been demonised and

50. See Kempe, pp. 179–81.

51. For a discussion of the medieval association of the male with mind or soul, see Alcuin Blamires, "Paradox in the Medieval Gender Doctrine of Head and Body," in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, ed. Peter Biller and A. J. Minnis (York: York Medieval Press, 1997), 13–30.

52. *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics,* ed. Ulrike Wiethaus (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p. 29.

53. For a discussion of the particular relevance of the *Meditations* to women, see Clarissa W. Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book of Margery Kempe* (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 147–54.

54. On Kempe's use of motherhood, see McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, pp. 28–63.

characterised negatively. John Lydgate's sarcastic poem praising the steadfastness of women offers us an interesting insight into an opinion of the late fifteenth century:

> This worlde is full of variaunce
> In everything, who taketh hede:
> That feith and trust and all contaunce
> Exiled ben, this is no drede;
> And, save oonly in womanhede,
> I can see no silkernesse.
> But, for all that, yet, as I rede,
> Bewar always of doublenesse.[55]

The distrust of women by men was ultimately caused by men's attempts to categorise and define the role of women. The duality which emerged in feminine roles arose because women were told they were simultaneously powerful and weak, destructive and creative by the Church and therefore society. The space in which women were permitted to operate reflected the desire of men to diminish the power that women may have and Kempe's movement into the masculine sphere may well have led to her exclusion from her community. Kempe is not a stable figure in her community; she is subjected to, and the product of, the variance which, as Lydgate notes, is a condition of life in this world.

55. *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology*, ed. R. T. Davies (London: Faber, 1963), p. 189.

Sergey Toymentsev

"It could have all turned out differently"

Ideological Censorship of the Marriage Plot in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*

This paper examines the marriage-plot convention of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* in the context of the conservative ideology of the "middle-class aristocracy" in early nineteenth-century England. It argues that despite *Mansfield Park*'s apparent endorsement of the patriarchal values of domesticity and femininity represented by the protagonists and the narrator, the novel does contain an equally valid yet utopian alternative offered by Henry Crawford, an alternative of difference and vitalistic openness necessarily suppressed by the regulatory pattern of the marriage plot.

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In the closing sequence of Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* (1999), when the camera jauntily swings high over an English landscape and penetrates into gardens and houses to take a sneak peek at the main characters' futures, Fanny's commanding voice-over narrates what happened to each character and twice acknowledges that "it could have all turned out differently, I suppose. . ." Each time the characters are freeze-framed for a moment and released after Fanny playfully adds 'but it didn't', as if it were in her power to decide their future destinies. As Claudia Johnson suggests, the momentary suspension of action in this refrain "breaks the illusion of realism to call attention to the intervention of her art."[1] Despite a number of "postmodern" liberties Rozema took in her cinematic adaptation of Jane Austen's novel,[2] the most audacious of which is arguably Fanny's blending into "a fictional stand-in for Austen" herself,[3] the film's conclusion does, nonetheless, echo an ironic ambigu-

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1. Claudia L. Johnson, "The Authentic Audacity of Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park*: 'Run Mad, but Do Not Faint,' " *London Times Literary Supplement* (31 December 1999), 16–17, p. 17.

2. Jan Fergus, "Two Mansfield Parks: Purist and Postmodern," in *Jane Austen on Screen*, eds. Gina and Andrew Macdonald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 69–89.

3. Belén Vidal, "Playing in a Minor Key: The Literary Past through the Feminist Imagination," in *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship*, ed. Mireia Aragay (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 263–86, p. 275.

The AnaChronisT 16 (Winter 2011): 18–33 ISSN 1219–2589 (print)

ity of the novel's happy-ending, where the omniscient narrator, in the manner of a dramatic epilogue, ponders alternative options for ending the story by pointing out that Fanny would have "voluntarily bestowed" herself on Henry, had he persevered, "and uprightly."[4] But he didn't. In her *Mansfield Park*, therefore, Rozema seems to follow Austen's subtle balancing between her seemingly wholehearted commitment to the conventional logic of the courtship plot with its inevitable telos of marital closure, and an ironic exposure of its self-imposed artificiality. Such an interplay, or tension, between the normative pressure of convention and the insidious transgression of it is, for example, evident in the famous opening sentence of her *Pride and Prejudice* ("It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife"), which simultaneously registers "both ironic humor and a sly truth"[5] or, as William Galperin points out, "the coercive weight of public opinion" and "the wish-fulfilling fantasy of women, whose affirmation of 'truth' is a by-product of their vulnerability and subordination."[6]

Just as each of Austen's novels, *Mansfield Park* relies on the marriage plot as its central structuring device responsible for keeping the narrative development under strict ideological control. Many generations of readers and critics of the novel have both attacked and defended the marriage of Fanny and Edmund from numerous perspectives just as Fanny Price, the novel's protagonist, has been seen equally as the victim of patriarchy and as its empowered subject benefiting from it. Jane Austen's sister Cassandra was the first to critique the union of Fanny and Edmund as the major flaw of the novel and even attempted to persuade her sister to let Henry marry Fanny and Edmund marry Mary.[7] For Tony Tanner, similarly, it "is perhaps the most nearly asexual marriage among the marriages achieved by Jane Austen's heroines." And yet, as he concedes, it is "a paradigmatic marriage for society in a larger sense" that symbolizes "far-reaching reconciliations and restorations" and therefore "transcends personal gratifications."[8] Given that Austen's marriage-plot convention, complicated by her preference for the intrafamilial alliance (with its "crippling effects"[9]), is insepara-

4. Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 434.

5. Catherine J. Kordich, *Bloom's How to Write about Jane Austen*, Chelsea House Publications, 2008, p. 126.

6. William H. Galperin, *The Historical Austen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 125.

7. Elizabeth Jenkins, "Address to the General Meeting of the Jane Austen Society," *Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society: 1976–1985*, Jane Austen Society (1989) 152–173, p. 166.

8. Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 173.

9. Johanna H. Smith, " 'My Only Sister Now': Incest in *Mansfield Park*," *Studies in the Novel* 19 (1987) 1–13, p. 1.

ble from the cultural and historical context of her time, it is important to emphasize the ideological component of this plot pattern. In this regard, *Mansfield Park* is generally considered to be "the most visibly ideological of Jane Austen's novels"[10] where she sets out "with almost evangelical clarity her views on the proper organization of society."[11] Marilyn Butler is one of the first critics to foreground the reading of *Mansfield Park* within its contemporary ideological context of female education in the spirit of Evangelicalism, whose moral ideal is personified by humble Fanny Price, an ideal set against the amoral and individualistic Crawfords. Yet if Fanny seems to be a "true Christian" from a conservative perspective, from a feminist one she reappears as a deathly pale and still "Snow White": instead of approving the abortive marriage closure of *Mansfield Park*, Gubar and Gilbert argue for the potential sisterly bond between Fanny and Mary Crawford.[12] Poststructuralist critics are particularly sensitive to the censoring work of the marriage plot that translates "the polyvalent language of the novelistic (oriented toward the signifier)" into "the univocal language of the ideological (oriented toward the signified)."[13] "In marrying Edmund instead of Henry Crawford," Joseph Litvak argues, "Fanny indeed helps Sir Thomas to consolidate his empire and to protect his property from dispersion at the hands of outsiders. In keeping the family circle closed, she affirms repetition over difference, and legitimates Sir Thomas's patriarchal program."[14] From a Marxist perspective, Eileen Cleere views the endogamous marriage as an economic strategy which utilizes Fanny as a domestic commodity "invested with both exogamous and endogamous sexual value [that] can be exchanged and retained simultaneously."[15] Despite the apparent oppressiveness of the novel's marriage-plot imperative, a few critics still undertake somewhat desperate attempts to salvage its moral value. Thus, Julie Shaffer contends that Austen's marriage plot can be seen as empowering for women since in questions of domesticity and romantic relations women *are* superior to men.[16] Glenda A. Hudson, for example, argues for the

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10. Marilyn Butler, "*Mansfield Park*: Ideology and Execution," in *New Casebooks: Mansfield Park and Persuasion,* ed. by Judy Simons (London: Macmillan, 1997), 19–36, p. 19.

11. Mary Evans, *Jane Austen and the State* (London: Tavistock, 1987), p. 27.

12. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale University Press, 2000), p. 165.

13. D. A. Miller, "Good Riddance: Closure in *Mansfield Park*," *Jane Austen: Mansfield Park. A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*, ed. Sandie Byrne (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 178–185, p. 180.

14. Joseph Litvak, *Caught in the Act*: *Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 24.

15. Eileen Cleere, "Reinvesting Nieces: *Mansfield Park* and the Economics of Endogamy," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 28.2 (1995) 113–30, p. 116.

16. Julie Shaffer, "Not Subordinate: Empowering Women in the Marriage Plot: The Novels of Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen," *Criticism* 34 (1992) 51–73.

moral benefits of the novel's expulsion of *difference* represented by the Crawfords and its authorization of endogamous *sameness* as the condition of domestic harmony: "Fanny and Edmund are of the *same* stock and are *similar* in appearance; they instinctively understand one another, and share the *same* views. . . In short, the sanctity of the family at Mansfield is preserved by the incestuous alliance."[17] In a more recent study, Mary Jean Corbett suggests we "[put] aside our critical preoccupation with the vicissitudes of the marriage plot . . . and . . . concentrate instead on the family plot," which empowers Fanny with a certain "degree of agency."[18]

As we can see, the novel provides enough evidence for both conservative and radical readings: in the former, we would endorse Fanny's inexpressive humility as a moral virtue rewarded by marriage in the end; in the latter, we would rehabilitate the Crawfords' expressive vitality exorcized by the narrative's closure. Such an interpretative duplicity of *Mansfield Park* is the result of the ideological censorship of its marriage plot, to which the narrator is fully committed while being ultimately incapable of totalizing the entire novel within a unified meaning. In what follows, I will extensively consider the historical and ideological context of *Mansfield Park*'s marriage plot, which not only prescribes the conservative ideal of domesticity and femininity but also points to an equally valid yet utopian alternative, or a "missed opportunity," offered by Henry Crawford, an opportunity which is inevitably suppressed by the realistic and regulatory pattern of the novel's plot. As William Galperin observes, "the missed opportunity" produced by the exigencies of the dominant plot with its forward temporal momentum is a constitutive residue of Jane Austen's fictions "suspended between the freedom of possibility . . . and the more probable world."[19] In the disciplinary continuum of her narratives, the utopian possibilities in which "it could [indeed] have all turned out differently" – such as the "improbable" marriage of Fanny and Henry, the clandestine romance of Frank and Jane or even dispensing with marriage entirely (like Tom Bertram or *Emma*'s Miss Bates) – do appear yet can only manifest themselves as being necessarily dismissed or foreclosed "under the sheer weight of impossibility."[20] To recover an alternative, or utopian, course of events buried under the layers of the novel's internalized censorship, I will also turn to Gilles Deleuze's theory of active and reactive forces that partly explains the triumph of the conservative ideal symbolized by the Fanny–Edmund alliance.

17. Glenda A. Hudson, "Incestuous Relationships: *Mansfield Park* Revisited," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 4.1 (October 1991) 53–68, pp. 61; 66.

18. Mary Jean Corbett, " 'Cousins in Love, &c' in Jane Austen," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 23 (2004) 237–59, pp. 244; 255.

19. William H. Galperin, " 'Describing What Never Happened': Jane Austen and the History of Missed Opportunities," *ELH* 73.2 (2006) 355–82, p. 379.

20. Galperin, p. 359.

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Ideologically, *Mansfield Park* manifests itself as the conservative project of the country house novel intended to improve the decaying state of the aristocratic family in the late 18th – early 19th century period known as the Regency Crisis.[21] Not only does *Mansfield Park* historically capture the transitional moment of aristocratic England, it also promotes the reinforcement of the domestic ideology as a programmatic cure for it, an ideology which is to solidify and preserve family and home values with the emphasis on paternal authority and thereby reanimate the traditional (national, patriotic) tendencies of the "middle-class aristocracy."[22] Before we look at how this ideological improvement of the English estate is accomplished throughout the novel's plot, let us first consider what exactly is wrong with Mansfield Park.

The Regency crisis of Mansfield Park is primarily represented through the irresponsible and cheerfully selfish behavior of Sir Thomas' son, Tom, who is supposed to be in charge of the family and the estate while his father is away in the West Indies. He spends most of his time at fashionable watering places gambling, drinking, and running up debts. When he is at Mansfield, he proves to be a master only in the arrangement of pleasurable activities, such as an impromptu ball or theatrical, not business matters. It is quite noteworthy that Tom is a rather marginal character in terms of his self-representation in much of the novel; he does not participate in the chief ideological dynamic of the narrative, which is organized around Fanny and Edmund as the agents of domesticity on the one side and the Crawfords as their antagonists (anti-domestic metropolitans) on the other. He consistently abstains from his regent's responsibilities yet he is too weak as a person to sustain his social transgressions in the form of a clearly defined (ideological) standpoint. His case represents the rank of the aristocracy in its decline, on the verge of extinction. The entropic tendency of Tom's hedonistic lifestyle is exemplified by the fact that he very nearly dies in his compulsive pursuit of self-gratification. Furthermore, although physically recovered and morally improved, Tom does not participate in the happy ending of the novel, which is ideologically marked by marriage as the promise of domestic stability in future. That is, it is unclear whether Tom as the heir to Mansfield will produce an heir himself and thereby continue the Bertram line (such suspicions are reinforced by the fact that throughout the novel there are no women among Tom's "intimate friends," but exclusively men). The marginalized and uncer-

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21. See Roger Sales, *Jane Austen and the Representation of Regency England* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

22. The term is taken from Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 159–60.

tain status of Tom as character is ultimately the result of the regulatory work of the narrative, which foregrounds the problematic of inheritance and pointedly suggests that not only might he fail to become a patrilineal successor, but his "connections" as well are made quite suspect in this respect. It is precisely Tom who initiates the subversion of Mansfield Park by inviting his latest "intimate friend" John Yates into the house and allowing him to use Mansfield as the stage for the theatrical (while the Crawfords are later recommended by Yates to take part in it). It is also Tom who proposes *Lover's Vows* as the play for the theatrical, the Rousseauian content of which rapidly escalates the destabilization of Mansfield Park (although he prefers to take minor parts in the play).

Therefore, Tom's personality, with his explicit preference of the interests of outsiders over those of the family, symbolizes the internal threat to the estate, a threat to blur the boundaries within Mansfield Park between the inside and the outside, the private and the public, relative and stranger, order and disorder, security and danger, depth and surface, the natural and the artificial, the masculine and the feminine, and so on. And it is the regulatory stabilization of the clear-cut divide between these dichotomies that becomes the chief objective of *Mansfield Park*'s project, where the character of Fanny as the exemplar of "steadiness and regularity of conduct,"[23] "the perfect model of a woman,"[24] "the one for whom habit [has] most power, and novelty least"[25] serves as the primary ideological device in the novel's work of the reconstitution of the value system in this historical moment of transition.

3

Given that Fanny is promoted as the agent of the resurrection of paternal authority, it is worth looking at the representation of Sir Thomas Bertram, who exemplifies the ideal of fatherhood *in transition*. As most commentators observe, Austen's characterization of Sir Thomas (as well as that of Fanny) was undertaken under the influence of Thomas Gisborne's writings, namely *An Enquiry into the Duties of Men* (as well as *An Inquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*). At the beginning, Sir Thomas does not match the standard of ideal fatherhood described by Gisborne, but as the novel's plot progresses, it registers his successive improvements, culminating in his ultimate admission of his faults ("grievous mismanagement") in the last chapter. Thus, one of the primary features of Gisborne's ideal father is that of being *affectionate* to his children: "A parent ought constantly to aim at gaining the affec-

23. Austen, p. 271.
24. Austen, p. 322.
25. Austen, p. 328.

tionate confidence of his children; and should lead them to regard him not as a father merely, but likewise as a friend. He must avail himself, that he may govern them properly, of the joint principles of love and fear."[26] Sir Thomas is emotionally unavailable to his children; he is strict, reserved, severe, and even sublime in his awesome gravity. Despite the fact that it is originally his intention to adopt Fanny into the Mansfield household, he nonetheless fails to be welcoming to the heroine upon her first arrival.[27] Even when he attempts to exert his fatherly authority through friendly considerateness, he fails to do so: his advice manifests itself as the ultimate order that aims at gaining "persuadableness"[28] rather than "affectionate confidence" from Fanny.

According to Gisborne, the father's attitude towards the marriages of daughters consists in not "constraining their choice in marriage"; the father should not impose his own decision on them but "may certainly be justified in requiring a longer pause and delay from them, when he deems the proposed connection unfavorable to their welfare."[29] Sir Thomas is aware that Maria is indifferent to stupid Rushworth and advises that her happiness should not be sacrificed for the economic advantage; yet he is "happy to secure a marriage which would bring him such an addition of respectability and influence."[30] The same holds for Sir Thomas' attitude towards the Crawford's proposal to Fanny. Despite her quite determined decline, he attempts to clarify the advantages of the "proposed connection."[31] Sir Thomas' advice discloses its absolute power in his decision to exile her to Portsmouth.

The failure of Sir Thomas' far too authoritative and unaffectionate pedagogy results in his ultimate inability to properly maintain his domestic government. Not only is he often physically absent in the West Indies, but Mansfield Park is marked by the absence of respect and recognition of the paternal authority on the part of the eldest son, whose debts prevent Sir Thomas from retaining the Mansfield living for Edmund. Despite his attempt to make Tom realize the harm that his lifestyle is doing to the estate, Tom finds a number of excuses to ignore him. Overall, it is not affection that governs Sir Thomas' attitude toward his children but rather his anxiety: "although he was a truly anxious father,"[32] he saw his daughters "becoming in

26. Thomas Gisborne, *An enquiry into the duties of men in the higher and middle classes of society in Great Britain, resulting from their respective stations, professions, and employments*, 2 vols. (London, 1811), Vol.1, p. 480.

27. Austen, p. 13.

28. Austen, p. 259.

29. Gisborne, p. 491.

30. Austen, p. 187.

31. Austen, p. 294.

32. Austen, p. 20.

person, manner, and accomplishment every thing that could satisfy his anxiety";[33] "though a truly anxious father, he was not outwardly affectionate, and the reserve of his manner repressed all the flow of their spirits before him."[34] His anxiety is not only about his children's future but also about his patriarchal power in general, which is effectively undermined by the worsening economic condition of the estate, brought about by the Napoleonic Wars (as well as economic difficulties in the West Indies). As Joseph Litvak observes, although for his own theatrically subversive purposes, *Mansfield Park* is "certainly one of the most anxious novels written. Anxiety may be the condition of all narratives, but here it seems especially acute."[35] It is the programmatic task of the novel's conservative project to promote Mansfield as the site of "a hope of the domestic happiness,"[36] despite its underlying anxiety and forces from outside, by the fictional restoration of the paternal authority, a restoration that could only be facilitated by foregrounding such an *ideological construction* as Fanny. For it is to Fanny that Sir Thomas is to be obliged for his transformation from the emotionally distant patriarch into the affectionate domestic father, a figure that is structurally necessary to secure his dominant position within both domestic and social historical contexts. It appears that it is not the "asexual" marriage of Fanny and Edmund that makes the resolution of the novel "happy," since it can be probabilistically calculated in advance thanks to Fanny's having Edmund as the only intimate companion at hand in her isolated existence at Mansfield. It is rather the reactivation of the paternal authority of Sir Thomas that fulfills the novel's ideological mission. It is precisely thanks to the incorporation of Fanny into the Mansfield family as an absolutely legitimate member that Sir Thomas finally realizes the proper duties of the "ideal father."

Thus, once all the undesirable characters are expelled from Mansfield Park (and from *Mansfield Park*'s plot as well) and desirable comfort is finally achieved ("Here was comfort indeed!"[37]), Sir Thomas gradually comes to an understanding of what has been missing in his plan for the education of his children:

> Something must have been wanting *within*. . . He feared that principle, active principle, had been wanting, that they had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice. They had been instructed theoretically in their religion, but never required to bring it into daily practice. To be distinguished for ele-

33. Austen, p. 21.
34. Austen, p. 20.
35. Litvak, pp. 4–5.
36. Austen, p. 436.
37. Austen, p. 429.

> gance and accomplishments – the authorized object of their youth – could have had no useful influence that way, no moral effect on the mind. He had meant them to be good, but his cares had been directed to the understanding and manners, not the disposition; and of the necessity of self-denial and humility, he feared they had never heard from any lips that could profit them. . . .
>
> Wretchedly did he feel that, that with all the cost and care of an anxious and expensive education, he had brought up his daughters without understanding their first duties, or his being acquainted with their characters and temper.[38]

In this passage on the proper task of moral education, Sir Thomas identifies its active principle as the instilling of the sense of duty that would in turn govern his daughters' inclinations and disposition. Furthermore, that active principle requires self-denial and humility; that is, for the educated *activity* comes from without (from the educator), while *passivity* from within. This practice is to be exercised *daily*, not theoretically but, as we should infer, *bodily*. The result of such an inculcation of duty is the disposition, which is a subjection of the denied/humiliated self to the internalized moral agency from without facilitated by affection, or 'affectionate infection,' namely love (given that tempers and inclinations are involved in the process). The father must love his children if he wants to instill that desirable sense of duty in their minds and thereby retain his paternal authority. The "moral effect on the mind" is therefore the selfless selfhood practiced bodily and daily with the ultimate devotion to the educator.

4

Throughout the novel Sir Thomas does not have a chance to practice his educational strategy on any of his children except Fanny, who is a surrogate daughter adopted through the benevolent act of patronage. As Clara Tuite observes, "the adoption of the poor niece is a function of the master's charity which throughout the eighteenth century changed from being a patriarchal duty to an individual action, as the aristocratic familial structure changed from patriarchy, which retained ties of kindred, to patriliny, a structure that reduces kin to the line of descent."[39] That is, the adoption of Fanny is to be viewed as the relatively widespread kinship practice of the period that served for the domestic purposes of the aristocratic family. Her "Cinderella-

38. Austen, p. 430.
39. Clara Tuite, *Romantic Austen: Sexual Politics and the Literary Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 104.

like" career is therefore the novel's ideological plot of female upward mobility: she is adopted from the periphery to the center of the aristocratic family in order to improve its moral ambience and facilitate the reconstruction of the paternal regime at Mansfield. Hence, the successful scenario of female upward mobility is predicated upon a number of her familial, social, and psychological characteristics: she must be a cousin to the son of the adopting family (which marks the transition of the marriage market from exogamy to endogamy); she must be of lower social status (which asserts the interclass relationship at the expense of the same-class one); and, finally, she must be selfless for the purpose of the inculcation of the sense of duty to which the aristocratic generation of the period turned out to be immune. As Tony Tanner describes Fanny's portrait, "Fanny is weak and sickly . . . timid, silent, unassertive, shrinking and excessively vulnerable . . . almost totally passive . . . a girl who triumphs doing nothing. She sits, she waits, she endures. . . [Her promotion] into unexpectedly high social position . . . seems to be a reward not so much for her vitality, as for extraordinary immobility. . . She is never, ever, wrong."[40] The list of such characteristics of the ultimate absence of life, or energy, can be extended: she does not have a fire in her room, she often suffers from headaches, she can't walk for too long because of her fatigue, etc. *To be* nothing and *to do* nothing is Fanny's price for being always right, for being the "perfect model of woman" that cannot be born but *produced* by the patriarchal machinery (gone awry) for the sake of domestic happiness. Clara Tuite describes Fanny as the "channel or vessel; she does not inherit, she is consumed and drawn in and chewed up by the line in order to correct and restore the smooth operations of patrilineal inheritance."[41] Completely emptied of herself, she is charged with the historical mission to transmit the ideological message of domestic felicity. In other words, she is not a Cinderella but rather a *scapegoat* supposed to atone for the crisis of the aristocratic family. It is precisely because of her fidelity to the conservative project of the preservation of "the continuity of the male estate"[42] (as well as nation and empire, as Edward Said would argue[43]) that she cannot marry Henry (whose anti-domesticity is manifested in his flamboyant promiscuity), which is mistaken by Sir Thomas for the unexpected irruption of individualism. As he exclaims,

> I had thought you peculiarly free from willfulness of temper, self-conceit, and every tendency to that independence, which prevails so much in modern days, even in young women. . . . But you have now shewn me that you

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40. Tanner, p. 143.
41. Tuite, p. 153.
42. Ellen Pollak, *Incest and the English Novel, 1684–1814* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 50.
43. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 80–97.

> can be willful and perverse, that you can will and decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you – without even asking their advice. You have shewn yourself very, very different from anything that I had imagined. . . . You do not owe me the duty of a child.[44]

What Fanny shows Sir Thomas is exactly what Sir Thomas ought to expect, provided he is more consistent in pursuing the project of the preservation of the aristocratic family via domesticity, where he himself is to be converted into an *affectionate* father from an *anxious* one. In her rejection of Henry, Fanny is more than ever right, just as she is "never, ever, wrong"[45] in her persistent abstinence from any manifestation of spontaneous activity. Quite on the contrary, according to the ideological framework of the novel's plot, it would be ultimately "perverse" if Fanny had married Henry, for she cultivates her sense of duty (or domestic super-ego) through the daily practice by incorporating it on the bodily / unconscious level. She does not know what she is doing because she is not supposed to know, since she is a hollow vessel for the transmission of systematically installed values.

Given that the marriage of Fanny and Henry is absolutely improbable according the programmatic plot of the novel (which is, to repeat, the *insemination* and preservation of duty rather than its *dissemination*), the narrator, nonetheless, playfully teases the reader with such an impossible possibility: "Would he have persevered, and uprightly, Fanny must have been his reward – and a reward very *voluntarily* bestowed. . ."[46] That Henry doesn't fit the straightjacket of the novel's happy ending is evident enough, yet the narrator grants him a "missed opportunity" of domestication (which he does not really need), which might be called a wish-fulfilling fantasy of conservative ideology. Had *Mansfield Park* been written at the time of John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or Tom Tykwer's *Lola Rennt*, it might have had two or even three alternate (not necessarily happy) endings, for the ideological constraints have become looser and at times invisible nowadays. But at Austen's time, the power / knowledge apparatus would not permit such a narrative frivolity, namely the alternative alliance of Henry as "bad domestic example"[47] and Fanny as the exemplar of domesticity, precisely because to avoid such an alliance is the first and foremost task of the novel's plot. In order to maintain the novel's ideological consistency, the narrator squeezes this alliance out into the domain of "missed opportunities," that is, the

44. Austen, p. 294.
45. Tanner, p. 143.
46. Austen, p. 434, my emphasis.
47. Austen, p. 433.

domain of "failures" that do not fit the required ideological profile. And yet, it is Fanny who is a failure due to her blind subjection to the daily practice of self-denial, while the Crawfords, who continue to fascinate the reader with their demonic vitality, would hardly complain about the "missed opportunity" of domestication generously granted by the omniscient narrator.

5

What would have happened if the marriage of Henry and Fanny had really taken place? To answer such a question we would need to consider Austen's notions of the probable and the improbable. As Clara Tuite observes, *Mansfield Park*'s proximity to the genre fairy-tales, such as Cinderella, where the interclass contact is didactically represented as mutually improving, increases

> its realist burden of the probable. This burden dictates arguing for the naturalness of what seems unnatural (surrogacy) and the probability of what seems improbable – in this case the education of the poor into the ways of the rich, and the marriage of the poor into the class of the rich. . . Realism as practiced by Austen involved eradicating the unnatural and the improbable, but also naturalizing what seemed unnatural. The realism of the genre of domestic realism in this sense offered great opportunities for the presentation of the natural as *corrected nature*.[48]

That is to say, the narrative technique of naturalization (i.e. converting *the unnatural/the improbable* into *the natural/the probable* and vice versa) is considered to be one of the major literary achievements of Austen. Yet, Tuite takes for granted the fact that the direction of (un)naturalization is overly dictated by the dominant ideological regime that authorizes its own notions of "the natural" and "the unnatural." It is, of course, a commonplace in Austen criticism that her work is predicated on the Burkean conservative ideology[49] that promotes English social and political stability rooted in "proud submission" and "dignified obedience"[50] against the "dust and powder of individuality"[51] of the French liberals. In Austen's narratives, the Burkean propaganda of

48. Tuite, p. 110.

49. See, for example, Avrom Fleishman, *A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967); Alistair Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971); and Marilyn Butler, "*Mansfield Park*: Ideology and Execution."

50. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 76.

51. Burke, p. 96.

domestic values is most effectively channeled through the "culture war" between the middle class aristocracy and the rebellious metropolitan dandyism, where the former as the novel's protagonists incessantly satirize and patronize the latter as its antagonists. But the satire and correction issued from the *ideologically* dominant class (such as Fanny in *Mansfield Park* or Mr. Knightley in *Emma*) does not imply the adequate representation of its opponent. Quite on the contrary, the protagonist's moral judgment and satiric critique of the antagonist proceeds from the effective failure of the former to represent the latter adequately, which is due to the unsurpassable epistemological gap between the two. Neither Fanny nor Mr. Knightley can comprehend the Crawfords and Frank Churchill respectively, and while failing to comprehend them, they criticize them for their epistemological inaccessibility and thereby manifestly betray their own ideological complicity. Both the Crawfords and Frank and Jane, therefore, escape their judgmental characterization while producing misperceptions and contrasting readings of themselves (e.g. conservative and radical).

The true identity of the novel's antagonists is even more shrouded in uncertainty by the omniscience of the narrator, whose ideological commitment to the dominant class is made apparent by the open expression of sympathy for the protagonists ("My Fanny,"[52] "poor Sir Bertram"[53]). Compared to Austen's other works, *Mansfield Park* is known for its extremely high use of free indirect discourse resulting in a "greater psychological depth of character"[54] as well as a "growing inner consciousness"[55] of the novel as a whole. Yet the increased use of free indirect discourse, where the narrator's authoritative perspective penetrates and absorbs the inner workings of the characters' minds, which marks Austen's mastery of psychological realism, also implies increased ideological control over the entire novel. In this regard, the narrator condemns Henry as "thoughtless and selfish from prosperity and bad example."[56] Even though Henry is presented as a careless libertine in the beginning, the narrator does, nonetheless, show that he has "moral taste enough to value"[57] Fanny. However, Henry's glimpse of reformation offered by the narrator serves only as a pretext for his later failure, which definitively proves his lack of moral integrity. As the narrator tells us, he could have done better, but "the temptation of immediate pleasure was too strong for a mind unused to make any sacrifice to right."[58]

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52. Austen, p. 427.
53. Austen, p. 428.
54. Louise Flavin, "*Mansfield Park*: Free Indirect Discourse and the Psychological Novel," *Studies in the Novel* 19.2 (1987) 137–59, p. 137.
55. Flavin, p. 156.
56. Austen, p. 108.
57. Austen, p. 218.
58. Austen, p. 434.

The only character who escapes the narrator's censorship is Mary Crawford, who, despite her cynicism and rebellious confidence, is allowed to express herself directly.[59] And yet, exempted from the narrator's judgment, she is still removed from the novel's happy ending. Even though she is "no villain,"[60] she is not rewarded by marriage either, which only intensifies her charismatic and enigmatic presence. As D. A. Miller demonstrates, there is an abundance of irony, ambiguity, and fascination about Marry Crawford in the novel, but what is really needed is the "*knowledge* of her real character."[61]

Therefore, Austen's most fascinating characters prove to be constitutively enigmatic, or opaque, as they are essentially under- or misrepresented: they are either removed from the plot by the ideologically (probabilistically) committed narrator as the undesirable causes of social discomfort or distorted through the epistemological lens of the ideologically dominant protagonists. Even in their self-representation they prove to be ungraspable, for they are always changeable, unpredictable, impulsive, and deliberately theatrical.

To overcome the predicament of the *opaque* representation of the novel's antagonists caused by the ideological censorship of the marriage plot, I would propose shifting the focus from the level of representation / interpretation to that of the functional / pragmatic analysis of force interaction presented in Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. According to Nietzsche's calculus of active and reactive forces, which measures the expression of impersonal (non-human) life beyond moral evaluations, we would no longer consider the characters' ideological affiliation as a key factor of their identity. Instead of looking at how a certain character manifests him/her-self in life, we would need to focus on how life as such manifests itself though a character. The more life expresses itself through a character, the more dynamic, mobile, mutable, ungraspable, *imperceptible*, and essentially subversive s/he is. In *Mansfield Park*, the Crawfords could be seen to stand for the Nietzschean ideal of active forces, while ascetic Fanny stands for that of reactive ones. And yet, reactive forces, which are the forces of obedience, adaptation and form-receiving, are necessarily to be viewed *in relation* to active forces, which are those of domination, transformation, and form-giving. Without active forces, Deleuze argues, "the reactions themselves would not be forces."[62] In history, however, the original hierarchy of forces is *inverted*: reactive forces are dominant, while active ones are dominated.

59. Flavin, p. 152.

60. Susan Morgan, *In the Meantime: Character and Perception in Jane Austen's Fiction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 148.

61. Miller, p. 183.

62. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 41.

According to Deleuze/Nietzsche, the triumph of reactive forces in history, where active forces are turned back against themselves and thereby separated from what they can do, results in the becoming-reactive of *all* forces that is responsible for the formation of reactive psychology (*ressentiment*, bad conscience, ascetic ideal) that constitutes the essence of modern man. The task of the genealogist is therefore to reestablish the original hierarchy of force relations and show how active forces are systematically neutralized and deprived of their manifestation in history. In this regard, *Mansfield Park* is to be viewed as the genealogical account of the intricate dynamic of active and reactive forces operating in early-nineteenth-century England, where the marriage of active and reactive forces is posited and entertained as a veritable possibility yet eventually dismissed as historically improbable by the current ideological regime.

Had the miraculous possibility of the marriage of Henry as aristocratic *flâneur* and Fanny as lower-middle-class loner at Mansfield been introjected into the probabilistic order of *Mansfield Park*'s plot, it would have exploded the entire ideological construction of the novel. And yet, if within *Mansfield Park*'s narrative frame such matrimonial confusion appears to be virtually impossible, within the unframed "reality," or "life" as the field of forces, subjected to chance (rather than political program), expression (rather than repression), self-affirmation (rather than self-denial), contamination (rather than purification), openness (rather than closure), and ex/en-dogamic promiscuity (rather than endogamic fidelity), it would seem quite "natural," if not *inevitable*. For Fanny being the epitome of vacuity and stillness, Henry serves here as her complementary missing part of vitality and mobility. In life rescued from ideological imprisonment such a perfect opportunity for the inter-circulation of energy between them would be impossible to prevent. But the novel's authoritative narrator demonstratively polices each and every deviation from the prescribed ideological scenario and thereby exposes the novel's ideological commitment to our "subversive questioning."[63] Even if a deviation is allowed, it is done only for the purpose of its correction and the reinforcement of control. At times it appears that the narrator, or probably Austen herself through the voice of the narrator, suggests that a little more pressure of life, or perseverance (*conatus*), would suffice to break through the wall of preservation ("Would he have persevered. . ."[64]), but in the novel the final push towards a vitalistic openness is always cut off by the narrative closure.

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63. Emily Auerbach, "The Liveliness of Your Mind: Pride and Prejudice" in *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 111–49, p. 112.

64. Austen, p. 434.

Consider, for instance, the ending of Volume 1 where Fanny is about to cross over the threshold of the ideological frame when she is finally convinced to participate in the rehearsal.

> Fanny could not say she did not – and they all persevered – as Edmund repeated his wish and with a look of even fond dependence on her good nature, she must yield. She would do her best. Every body was satisfied – and she was left to the tremors of a most palpitating heart. . . . They *did* begin – and being too much engaged in their own noise, to be struck by unusual noise in the other part of the house, had proceeded some way, when the door of the room was thrown open, and Julia appearing at it, with a face all aghast, exclaimed, "My father is come! He is the in the hall at this moment."[65]

This passage exemplifies the climactic clash of the opposite forces of the novel's narrative, that of repression / negation and of subversion / affirmation. The narrative demonstrates the effective force of collective perseverance on the one hand and the inability to proceed further on the other: the movement of life is arrested via the installation of the figure of the father. And yet, even if the theater is pulled down, a revolution of forces prevented, and paternal authority reinstated, forces of life, pleasure, enjoyment, and expression are not excluded from Mansfield (for their pulsation animates the slow progression of the plot which is itself supposed to repress them) but are rather spread out in myriad forms of insurrection which are vigilantly kept in check until they are utterly cut off by the marriage closure that celebrates the stasis of domestic comfort.

65. Austen, p. 159.

Gabriella Moise

"Heaven be praised for it, the problem of space remained"

The Phenomenology of Pictorial Space in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*[1]

The painterly dilemma of translating reality into the language of aesthetics surfaces with a renewed difficulty for Lily Briscoe the painter of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. The novelty of her challenge rests in her encounter of post-Cartesian (architectural, corporeal, pictorial) spaces, above all the "hideously difficult white space" of her canvas along with the emptiness of domestic spaces left behind by the death of her primary subject, Mrs. Ramsay. This paper explores Lily's Cézannesque formalism, which she accomplishes through establishing a phenomenological relationship with things, bodies, and spaces. The painter familiarizes herself primordially and synaesthetically with her surrounding reality in a Merleau-Pontian fashion, defying the hegemony of cognition, language, and vision. Her body becomes the locus of the chiasmic node of the visual and the tactile, she realizes her own embeddedness and homogeneous oneness with the world and transposes this relationship, that is, her vision, onto the canvas.

Challenging Painterly Spaces

Radically different painterly expressive modes characterize the two phases of Lily Briscoe's artistic enterprise in Woolf's novel. Her stages inevitably reflect on the respective socio-cultural milieus of pre-war gentility and audacious experimentalism, whereas the Great War as a thematic intermission coincides with the structural caesura of the novel embedded in "Time Passes," the middle section. Nevertheless, my analysis does not aim at the exploration of the macrocosm of artistic representation but focuses on one of the most significant constitutive means of the painter, that is, the space of vision. Vision here simultaneously indicates a sight or a specta-

1. The work is supported by the TÁMOP 4.2.1./B-09/1/KONV-2010-0007 project. The project is implemented through the New Hungary Development Plan, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

cle, the entirety of the visible things to be depicted and also, in its much more obscure sense of modernist poetics, it signifies in a Cézannesque fashion "an emerging organism,"[2] "an emerging order,"[3] to adopt Merleau-Ponty's terms here, or "the framework of steel,"[4] as Lily formulates the underlying structure of reality.

The reconciliation of reality with its visual equivalents of abstracted, stylized forms, the realization of the constellation of things, bodies and their receptive space, and the intertwining of one's lived and visualized spaces are Lily's ultimate challenges. She has to surrender her claims on stability and calculability of the Cartesian space of "The Window" section for the sake of facilitating the potentials of phenomenal spatiality and a synaesthetic experience of her painterly subject, i.e. Mrs. Ramsay. The latter's physical absence in the closing chapter, "The Lighthouse," forces Lily to search for an alternative signifying system, a fundamentally altered spatial and corporeal rendering, which, unlike the first part's solidifying tendency, offers impermanence and fluidity. What engages Lily's creative potentials is the transubstantiation of the mobility of her circumambient reality, including her own locus and proximity from bodies and/or things into the formalist order, in which "one colour melt[s] into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric [the painting] must be clamped together with bolts of iron" (186).

Lily's canvas, which opens up the third dimension, a perspectival "depth" in the fabric of the narrative, functions as an interface for such notions as perception and knowability of the world, representation, human relationships, and painterly techniques. There is, however, a discernible shift of emphasis regarding Lily's artistic dilemmas in the course of the novel. Whereas in "The Window" section she desperately wants to take hold of the quintessential visual trope of Mrs. Ramsay, and, additionally, to find the painterly equivalent of reality, in "The Lighthouse" section, her attention is split between the technical, structural, and aesthetic issues and questions of metaphysical concerns. Besides Lily's active agency and artistic urge to complete her painting, a meditative tone and a powerful inner interrogation accompany her creative procedure, following the cataclysmic intermission of "Time Passes." Lily expands the painterly space through transfiguring elements of reality onto the canvas by "model[ling] her way into the hollow there" (186). The challenge of modeling the "hideously difficult white space" (174) recurs with renewed forces later on when she reflects upon the same act as "tunnelling" (188). Both terms allude to the paramount difficulty of a painter, that is, the creation of the illusion of three-

2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1964), p. 17.

3. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 14.

4. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 54.

dimensional space on the flat surface of the canvas. Whereas "modelling" highlights plasticity, achieved not only by forms but also by the substantiality of colors, in this manner, indicating modernist painting's kinship with sculpture, "tunnelling" emphasizes the third dimension of depth. Figuratively, the latter also reveals Lily's psychological journey into her private past and that of the Ramsays by evoking episodes of collective memories of the summers spent with the family. She finds herself "to be on a narrow plank, perfectly alone, over the sea" (187) in a uniquely fertile solitude, a state she can afford for the first time in the narrative, accompanied solely by the silent, however, inspiring Mr. Carmichael, who signifies poetic language and artistic creativity. Mr. Carmichael's emergence in Lily's microcosm is not accidental at this stage of her creative process. The expressive power of the image let it be verbal or pictorial is doubled by the juxtaposition of poet and painter, and subsequently by their respective artifacts both bearing the capacity to fuse the temporal and the spatial dimensions. Lily also admits that she "felt curiously divided, as if one part of her were drawn out there [over the sea] . . . the other had fixed itself doggedly, solidly, here on the lawn" (171). Her sense of being divided is not limited exclusively to the physical duplicity of the shore and the sea as a geographically determined narrative and artistic frame. She also constrains herself to keep Mr. Carmichael "not too close . . . but close enough for his protection" (161), while she experiences a total immersion in the space of her painting and faces the compelling question of how to translate the visible sphere into the language of art. "Against her will she had come to the surface, and found herself half out of the picture, looking, a little dazedly, as if at unreal things, at Mr. Carmichael" (193). The passage reveals Lily's unique relationship with reality, the way the painterly space occupies the actual, physical environment of the painter, and also, how entities of reality become secondary compared to the forms of the artistically generated universe.

The closing chapter abounds in Lily's posing such paramount questions as "What is the meaning of life?" (175) or "Who knows what we are, what we feel? Who knows even at the moment of intimacy, This is knowledge?" (187). Her inquisitive tone prevails "The Lighthouse" section along with the pervasive sense of uncertainty, as well as Lily's and Mrs. Ramsay's (in her conjured up presence) drive to identify, to name, to define things of their reality.[5] This results in the intensification of the rhythm of the narrative and the urge to find a solution, a reconciliatory communicative means. Singling out things by pointing at them and offering a name apparently

5. " 'Oh,' she said, looking up at last at something floating in the sea, 'is it a lobster pot? Is it an upturned boat?' " (174); " 'Is it a boat? Is it a cork?' she [Mrs. Ramsay] would say . . . 'Is it a boat? Is it a cask?' Mrs. Ramsay said. . . . Aren't things spoilt then, Mrs. Ramsay may have asked (it seemed to have happened so often, this silence by her side) by saying them?" (186, 187); "Little words that broke up the thought and dismembered it said nothing" (193).

cannot establish a satisfactory apprehensive relationship between man and reality. The inadequacy of language is tangible in “The Window” section as well,[6] yet towards the closure of the novel affective and aesthetic communication is becoming imperative.

Securing a clearly circumscribable creative space appears to be an essential condition for Lily to complete her painting. She draws a demarcation line between herself and Mr. Ramsay, while she secures the sight of him and his children on her horizon during the whole section. At the same time, she maintains her carefully measured proximity with Mr. Carmichael. She delineates the space of creation by “[setting] her canvas firmly upon the easel, as a barrier, frail, but she hoped sufficiently substantial to ward off Mr. Ramsay and his exactingness” (163). In this manner, Lily doubly marks the limits of creation: physically, by distancing all the other characters, the house, and the Lighthouse, metaphorically, by experimenting with an alternative space. From the first “trembling” momentum (172), the descent of her brush, Lily is preoccupied with the problem of space and the potential depth and plasticity of the momentarily resisting canvas. Her own distance, both spatial and temporal, and the gaping emptiness of Mrs. Ramsay’s formal corporeal presence call for a different mode of representation. A rationally conditioned perspective and painterly frame suggested by “The Window” section, in which Mrs. Ramsay frequently occurs in the drawing room window, as a framed beauty, as the object of admiration, is no longer inspirational, let alone, adoptable for Lily. At this decisive stage, she experiences space unlike in the first chapter. Her stance shows no signs of rigidity and fixity, she is not forced into a prescribed network of visible things any more. On the contrary, she is in a continuous, rhythmic movement, walking back and forth between “the edge of the lawn” and her easel (161, 169, 176, 185, 219, 225), exchanging glances with the distant Lighthouse and the vanishing boat of Mr. Ramsay and his company, or noticing the proximity of Mr. Carmichael (161, 173, 174, 186, 194, 195, 207, 210, 219, 225). A whole series of images engulf Lily with which she engages herself in an affective and perceptual interaction. The images vary from

6. Cf. “for it was not knowledge but unity [Lily] desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge” (57); “The words . . . sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water out there, cut off from them all, as if no one had said them, but they had come into existence of themselves. . . . [Mrs. Ramsay] did not know what they meant, but, like music, the words seemed to be spoken by her own voice, outside her self, saying quite easily and naturally what had been in her mind the whole evening while she said different things” (120). As the excerpts indicate, words and language lose their conventional function and either an extensive figurative condensation permeates them or they totally discard the one-to-one referentiality between signifier and signified.

purely visual ones as the sight of the boat, the company of Carmichael, the "puffing and blowing sea monster" (207), or "some light stuff" that whitens the window (218) to the tangible emptiness of the drawing room steps or "the heavy draperies of grief" (166),[7] to the aural percept of "the squeak of a hinge" of the drawing-room window (212). This relationship of things, as visible, audible, tangible entities constitutes a phenomenological space that envelops Lily, positioning her as one among the things to be perceived.

Beyond the Framed Vision: Cézanne's *Réalisation*

As Maurice Merleau-Ponty observes, such a "[s]pace is no longer what it was in the *Dioptric*, a network of relations between objects such as would be seen by a witness to my vision or by a geometer looking over it and reconstructing it form outside."[8] The Cartesian artistic space prescribes a mathematically calculated proximity of things and figures along with (and this, in fact, is even more significant) the position of the painter/viewer as external to, hence, estranged and disembodied from the painted dimension. As Anne Friedberg examines the function of windows, frames, and perspective itself, "the Cartesian subject [is] centered and stable, autonomous and thinking, standing outside of the world."[9] This "centred and stable" position necessarily confines the subject to immobility, which relationship is supposed to be controlling and apparently assures a complete understanding and knowledge of the image or the thing being looked at.

This appears to be radically different from phenomenologically defined spatiality, which is the dominant spatial configuration of the narrative, preliminarily occurring in the introductory chapter, however, most tangibly presented in "The Lighthouse." Not only Lily's perseverant movement defies fixity and rigidity of the Cartesian model of representation but her surrendering of the primacy of visual perception whose essence lies predominantly in the identification of the viewed things forcing them to fall dead within their respective categories. Lily, following the method of Cézanne's *réalisation*, that is, the transubstantiation of reality into

7. Lily describes Mr. Ramsay's unbearable demand for sympathy through this image. Besides the unbearable weight suggested by the image, it also alludes to the painter's eye that detects substantiality in any possible object. Drapery appears to be a prominent painterly theme that challenges artists with the problematic of the light and shadow effect, primarily, raised by the wrinkled surface of the fabric.

8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1964), p. 178.

9. Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), p. 47.

meaningful forms, "looked blankly at the canvas" (171) or, at other times, the wall, the hedge, the step, the boat, all recurrent objects of her vision. She does so not out of some paralysis but because of a conscious disruption of anchoring her artistic observation merely in the appearance of things, and opts for a reflection on the very process of seeing. On the one hand, the things she looks at are emphatically empty and devoid of their former role (e.g. the window being the frame of Mrs. Ramsay's beauty, the step being the "stage" for Mrs. Ramsay and James functioning as the models for Lily's painting). On the other hand, some of the objects of her vision like the sight of the boat or Mr. Ramsay and his children are withdrawing into invisibility, gradually changing their proximity from the viewer and, at the same time, their contours and shapes are indefinite. Hence seer and seen alike are in permanent movement drawing a rhythmical pattern of a constantly changing interaction. The way things lose their primarily functional identity Lily also leaves behind her social selves ("the old-maidish" [161] single, the woman who cannot paint – Tansley's firm judgment of female artists – the one whose duty is to offer sympathy to Mr. Ramsay) for the sake of uniting herself with the metaphysical depth of surface appearances. "For what could be more formidable than that space? Hers she saw again, she thought, stepping back to look at it, drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers – this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention" (172–3). Lily can secure victory over her "ancient enemy" if she is ready to perform what Gottfried Boehm terms "contemplative vision"[10] concerning Cézanne's mode of perceiving nature. "This necessitates a particular mode of adherence, which is capable of viewing form and its content, as well as the structure of a painting and its effect upon its viewer simultaneously."[11] The conflation of these constituent parts is expressed in the concept of *réaliser* which "verb fuses the most diverse aspects into one single act: seeing and the sight of nature, reflection and painting itself."[12] The idea of merging the biologically determined perception and the recognition of "the other thing . . . at the back of appearances" (172) (as Lily formulates the quintessential invisible emerging in front of her eyes), as well as the fusion of the mere procedure of displaying paint on the canvas with the distilled metaphysical revelations of ex-

10. Gottfried Boehm, *Paul Cézanne: Montagne Sainte-Victoire, Eine Kunst-Monographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1988), p. 54 ("denkenden Schauens"). Hereafter, quotations from Gottfried Boehm's *Paul Cézanne Montagne Sainte-Victoire* appear in my translation.

11. Boehm, p. 54. ("Erfordert ist eine Weise der Zuwendung, die zusammenzu-sehen vermag: die Form mit dem Gehalt, den Bildbau mit seinen Wirkung.")

12. Boehm, p. 54. ("Das Verb faßt verschiedenste Aspekte in ein Tun zusammen: das Sehen und die Ansichtigkeit der Natur, reflektieren und malen.")

istence describe Lily's very creative process, especially in its altered form of her second attempt at the portrait of Mrs. Ramsay.

The eradication of Cartesian spatiality also results in the dissolution of the hierarchy among figures and forms formerly subjected to a single viewpoint of exclusive control. The idea of proportionality prescribes a cavernous spatial order in which hollows, things, and their encompassing space are heterogeneous in nature and origin. "Along with the abolition of the mathematical perspective, Cézanne eliminates the concept of the empty space that is filled by things. This arrangement is replaced by a dense, filled-up space . . . in which things are connected to their places, hence thing and place share a common origin."[13] This approach also suggests the painter's personal incorporatedness in the very sphere s/he depicts. S/he ceases to be an outsider to the painterly space: the artist paints from the inside. Lily's lines and colors generate space the moment they fall upon the canvas, assisting her in the Cézannesque *réalisation*, the transposition of elements of reality into the painting.

> With a curious physical sensation, as if she were urged forward and at the same time must hold herself back, she made her first quick decisive stroke. The brush descended. It flickered brown over the white canvas; it left a running mark. A second time she did it – a third time. And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related. (172)

Flux, continuity, oneness are doubly formulated in Lily's experience: her "running mark" is the visual equivalent of her flickering brush, which is the elongation of her bodily move, whereas the traces of paint imposed on the canvas and their rhythmical pattern of "pausing and flickering" affect Lily in return since she herself performs a conspicuously similar movement. The homogeneous co-existence of things and their places is also emphasized by the oneness of pauses and the descending brush, as well as the analogous white spots still untouched by paint and the traces of brushstrokes upon the canvas. Lily creates space and its content simultaneously, condensing places, characters, and verbality into forms and their enveloping intersubjective space. Through the notion of memories, she does not restrict herself to the artistic transformation of spatial/visual elements but fuses spatiality with the temporal dimension, thus she recreates the totality of reality in her painting. Her focus is switching between the external and internal spheres: the object of her perception is as much the intangi-

13. Boehm, p. 103. ("Cézanne hat mit der wissenschaftlichen Perspektive das Konzept eines leeren, mit Dingen gefüllten Raumes abgebaut. An seine Stelle tritt der dichte, erfüllte Raum, im dem sich – wie schon die Aquarelle zeigten – die Dinge mit ihrem Ort verbinden, beide gleichen Ursprungs werden.")

ble opacity of the past, her memories, through which she preserves a corporeal link (for instance by crouching at the feet of Mrs. Ramsay on the steps) as the physically rendered immediate environment of the house.

The manner in which Cézanne viewed space as being identical with its content, the things filling that space up, corresponds to Merleau-Ponty's idea concerning the relationship of the body and the world, the body being one among other objects and things inhabiting the world as such. "Things are an annex or prolongation of [the world]; they are incrusted into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body."[14] Merleau-Ponty elaborates his concept of the flesh in one of his last writings "The Intertwining – The Chiasm" published posthumously in *The Visible and the Invisible*, in which he offers a new ontological perspective on the interrelatedness of the subject-object-world triad. As Elisabeth Grosz explains Merleau-Ponty's concept, "[f]or him, the notion of the flesh is no longer associated with a privileged (animate) category, but is being's most elementary level. . . . Flesh brings to the world the capacity to turn the world back on itself, to induce its reflexivity, to fold over itself, to introduce that fold in being in which subjectivity is positioned as a perceiving, perspectival frame."[15] This model enables the philosopher to eliminate crucial dichotomies such as the external and the internal, the visible and the invisible or the subject and the object and it also introduces a reflexivity grounded in the very chiasmic relationship of such categories.

"A dancing rhythmical movement"

The realization of the body-world nexus, subsequently, my being as a subject, is optimized in visuality, since "[t]he eye lives in this texture as a man lives in his house."[16] Merleau-Ponty's illustrative model envisions the multiple engulfment of the perceptive organ that dwells in the house of the human body that inhabits the texture of the world as an integral tissue of its flesh. House and body become naturally analogous. In this conflation, the body's locus cannot preserve permanence and fixity, partly due to the perpetual movement of things, the pulsation of the enveloping-enveloped bodies. Lily's characteristic movement, which is reinforced by "a dancing rhythmical movement" (172) drawn by her brush, echoes both Cézanne's and Merleau-Ponty's idea concerning the mutual relationship of movement and perception. Cézanne examines the role of movement within the frames of the painterly space.

14. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 163.

15. Elizabeth Grosz, "Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, and the Question of Ontology," in *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary Encounters with Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Gail Weiss (Albany: State U of New York P, 2008), 13–29, pp. 22, 23.

16. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 166.

> [Movement] occurs in the genesis of the painting, where one particular *tache* attains its context, where the "pre-objecthood" of elements differentiates itself into qualities of the landscape, transformed into aspects of things, into an experience of space, into the entire drama of unfolding nature. Time and movement do not occur *in* space as far as their origin is concerned; rather they *produce* space *and* things.[17]

This preceding phase of substantiating and solidifying the visual percept onto the canvas evokes the affective, pre-verbal communication that both Mrs. Ramsay and Lily make attempts at in "The Window" section, following the realization of their failure to grasp the essence of reality through their continual urge to define and to name. The painting provides the viewer simultaneously with the thingness of its constituents and their embedding space through phenomenal experience. Lily worked out the fundaments of the Cézannesque color scheme during "The Window" section, which gained completion in the substantiality and solidity of form-arrangements within a composition bearing the strength of "bolts of iron" (186). "[S]he began precariously dipping among the blues and ambers, moving her brush hither and thither, but it was now heavier and went slower, as if it had fallen in with some rhythm which was dictated to her . . . by what she saw, so that while her hand quivered with life, this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current" (173–4). Her hand and its extension, that is, the brush, perform the rhythm dictated by the energy of surrounding objects of nature, which movement J. Hillis Miller terms as "the choreographed and choreographing dance."[18] Lily as an organic part of the world, assisted by the capacity of vision, can internalize this generative

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17. Boehm, p. 103. ("Die Bewegung, [die wir wahrnehmen, ist deswegen auch anderer Art]. Sie vollzieht sich in der Genese des Bildes, dort wo der einzelne Fleck in einen Kontext übergeht, das Vor-Gegenständliche der Elemente sich zu Qualitäten der Landschaft ausdifferenziert, zu Dingaspekten, Raumerfahrungen, zum ganzen Schauspiel der werdenden Natur. Zeit und Bewegung vollziehen sich nicht *im* Raum – sondern *bewirken den* Raum *und* die Dinge – ihrer Existenz nach.")

18. J. Hillis Miller, "Mr. Carmichael and Lily Briscoe: The Rhythm of Creativity in *To the Lighthouse*," in *Modernism Reconsidered*, ed. Robert Kiely (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983), 167–189, p. 171. In this article, Miller elaborates what he considers the essential nature of Woolf's creativity, which he introduces right at the beginning as "a matter of extrapolation, the projection out into the unknown of a life force, a constructive force, whether moral, collective, or artistic. . . . [An] extrapolation reaching out from what is now and here toward what is there and not yet" (pp. 167, 168). Miller explores the various representations of this "*buoyant élan*" (p. 167) on the level of essential characters, demonstrating how each of them in their own manner and with different success is driven by such energies. The focus of his essay falls on language and narration as an obvious yet elusive vehicle of creativity.

pulsation, her body emerging as one with nature. The interlacing of time and space through the act of movement defies the Cartesian fixity of the viewer and his/her corporeal distance and alienation from the world.

Movement of another nature than that of Lily's defines all essential characters of the narrative. They are all governed by different directionalities: some, in desperate search for anchorage, are drawn to Mrs. Ramsay, to her inextinguishable "capacity to surround and protect," to "the torch of her beauty" (44, 47), like bees "drawn by some sweetness or sharpness" (58). The same converging force motivates each act and movement of James, who, on the one hand, is unable to loosen his emotional and psychological attachment to his mother, and, on the other hand, longs frantically to visit the Lighthouse, a wish that comes true, naturally enough, after Mrs. Ramsay's death. Hence, a centripetal drive is completed, and James, along with Mr. Ramsay and Cam, reunite themselves with the absent Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay's movements, on the other hand, bear a centrifugal direction since she emanates light and creative energies continually. "[F]olding her son in her arm, braced herself, and, half turning, seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating. . ." (42). The radiation of generative energies does not cease with her death, her absence. Lily conjures up Mrs. Ramsay's image or, it would be more precise to say that Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal body always already filled up the Ramsays' space in an oneiric manner similarly to Lily's image of Mrs. Ramsay's presence in their life as the sensation of awakening after a dream. "For days there hung about her, as after a dream some subtle change is felt in the person one has dreamt of, more vividly than anything she said, the sound of murmuring. . ." (58). Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal body, a space multidimensionally expanding, is summoned on Lily's perceptual screen, that is, her canvas, assisting her accomplishment of producing aesthetic depth, the space of "reflection and subjectivity."[19]

> She saw her canvas as if it had floated up and placed itself white and uncompromising directly before her. . . . The brush descended. . . . [A]nd so, lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed (she felt it looming out at her) a space. Down in the hollow of one wave she saw the next wave towering higher and higher above her. For what could be more formidable than that space? (171–172)

19. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 128.

The moment of summoning upsurges as a continuation of Lily's "decisive stroke" – a loaded expression that functions here as a corporeal gesture, alluding to the stroke of the lighthouse and that of the painter's instrument: firstly, by the literally taken brushstroke, secondly, by evoking light, an indispensable element of painting.[20] We actually witness the becoming of space, the metamorphosis of the two-dimensional white surface overwhelmingly gaping in front of Lily into a multifarious spatial modulation. The painter immerses herself in a harsh duel-like interaction with the canvas, which is also indicative of the difficulty of subject formation and reflexivity. Her act is preceded by a series of hesitant inquiries concerning the proper point of entry, "the point to make the first mark" (172). She is about to depict something not primordially given, not as a mere "translation of a clearly defined thought"[21] but rather executes the process through which that something springs into life, into visibility.

Oppositional forces draw Lily into two different directions: firstly, as a merge with the world and its organization as it appears only to the painterly eye, and, at the same time, as a staggering movement, a moment of estrangement to enable herself to weld the experience into one single spectacle. The forceful downward strike of her brushstroke, on the other hand, recalls Mrs. Ramsay's flashing needles with which "she created drawing-room and kitchen" (43), that is, spaces of domesticity. These procreative acts highlight the identical features of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay.[22] Lily's most prominent tool, the ultimate generative vehicle at this particular stage of artistic expression is the line.

> Figurative or not, the line is no longer a thing or an imitation of a thing. It is a certain disequilibrium kept up within the indifference of the white paper; it is a certain process of gouging within the in-itself, a certain constitu-

20. The designating power of the stroke appears as a main thematic concern of "Time Passes," the middle section of the novel. This phase plays a crucial role in the bridging of the two spatially organized sections, the framing chapters, by its predominantly temporal setting. Its central symbol is the Lighthouse presented, ambivalently, through extinguished lights, distorted reflections, and its solitarily haunting strokes, summoning the image of the dead Mrs. Ramsay as a spectral entity.

21. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 19.

22. John Hawley Roberts establishes the analogy between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily in his essay " 'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf" (1946) based on their inclination "to create order" (p. 845). Mrs. Ramsay tries to mend "the inadequacy of human relationships" (p. 844) and meets her end without a genuine and satisfactory solution to the problem of relationships, whereas Lily's "difficulty is to transfer . . . design to the canvas" (p. 845). She also suffers from the lack of harmony and balance, permanently struggling with the disequilibrium of the masses on her canvas.

> tive emptiness. . . . The line is no longer the apparition of an entity upon a vacant background, as it was in classical geometry. It is, as in modern geometries, the restriction, segregation, or modulation of a pre-given space.[23]

Perhaps this indifference is what triggers Lily's "decisive stroke" and the oncoming battle she must necessarily fight against space and absence. Lily here simultaneously scores her own "in-itself" and that of the canvas that presupposes a contiguity with Mrs. Ramsay as a spatial design. The line's constitutive power enables the painter to demolish the conventionally acclaimed imitative instrumentality of the line as one of the fundamental pillars of mimetic representation. The canvas bears the imprints of the "pre-given space," i.e. Mrs. Ramsay, awaiting the generative painterly work.

Prior to shaping her way into the "white and uncompromising" (171) space of the canvas, Lily impulsively steps back to create a controlling distance. The painter, who willingly discarded the means of the mimetic mode of representation, faces a supreme hindrance, namely, the issue of how to "realize" (*réaliser* in Cézanne's sense) the world. Lily's most prominent difficulty emerging in the creative process is twofold: firstly, she has to face the challenge of the engulfing emptiness of the canvas; secondly, she is confused about the means of transforming the circumambient reality into form, turning her vision into design. This latter problem takes on a protean diversity from the moment "[Lily] took her brush in hand . . . [when] the demons set on her" (23): the struggle with the surface elusiveness of color for the sake of creating the underlying shape (23, 54, 176, 186); the difficulty of grasping the essence of Mrs. Ramsay, of finding the analogous visual metaphor through which Lily can express her the most adequately (55, 58, 59, 80, 175); "the problem of relationship, simultaneously human and formal"[24] (60, 80, 93, 94, 101 111, 161, 187); or the haunting empty space of the canvas (92, 171, 172 173, 186, 195, 224). The issue of form and meaning emerges in a series of subtle painterly dilemmas for Lily, echoing Fry's own notions of artistic expression.[25] John Hawley Roberts has made a vanguard attempt[26] to draw the parallel between Roger Fry's aesthetic ideals and

23. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 184.

24. John Hawley Roberts, " 'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf," *PMLA* 61 (1946) 835–847, p. 844.

25. Roberts also acknowledges that Lily's "ideas about art are identical with those of Roger Fry" (p. 842).

26. Roberts's essay is the first one that explores "the question as to whether or not any of Fry's critical ideas, as expressed in such essays as those collected in *Vision and Design* (1920) and *Transformations* (1926) or in the *Cézanne* monograph (1927), were in any way incorporated in Mrs. Woolf's work" (835). He analyses two of Woolf's novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), which he considers particularly relevant for his purposes as these "were done

Woolf's writing technique. Roberts introduces Fry's concepts partly through the art of Cézanne, who serves as an unquestionable model for the English art critic. "Realizing for [Cézanne is meant] . . . the discovery in appearances of some underlying structural unity."[27] Roberts goes on to claim that both Cézanne and Woolf express this unity through "a rhythm of plastic movement."[28] Fry's choice of words unveils two significant components of the novels explored by Roberts: first, the continual thematic and compositional pulsation of the text (the series of openings and closures or the repetitive pattern of up-and-down movement); second, the plasticity owing to this dynamism, which incorporates visual and substantial qualities alike. Lily's figure fuses the aesthetic principles of Fry's and Cézanne's artistic theories, and, she becomes a substitute for both of them manifested through her artistic conflicts of grasping reality and the ceaseless confrontation with the implacable canvas.

Christopher Reed goes beyond Roberts's claims concerning the painter's figure being a representative of formalist artistic ideals. Roberts attributes the painter's presence in the novel to the influence of Post-Impressionist aesthetics in which Woolf got immersed at the time of writing *To the Lighthouse*. Although Reed does not disregard the formalist aesthetic context of these works (more precisely of Woolf's novels till the 1920s) either, his analysis offers an alternative status for Lily's character: her being a trope for "Woolf's narrative technique."[29] "Woolf's technique is to mediate the narrative through layers of representation that deny traditional authorial claims to an omniscient knowledge transferable to the reader. Here the painter's rejection of seeing-as-having is translated into the author's refusal to give authoritative knowledge."[30] Woolf exploits the theme of painting and indirectly the potentials of visual signification for the sake of demonstrating how the conventional narrative voice, and, at the same time, language prove to be insufficient to get access to the characters and to express reality. As Patricia Joplin observes, Lily's inability to represent her subject lies in her insistence on getting to know Mrs. Ramsay in the same manner as a reader would demand the knowability

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at a time when Fry and Mrs. Woolf were most closely associated and because they [the novels] are . . . the most striking and effective results of the influence. . ." (p. 835).

27. Fry quoted in Roberts, p. 842

28. Fry quoted in Roberts, p. 842.

29. Christopher Reed, "Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics," in *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Diane F. Gillspie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 11–35, p. 22.

30. Reed, p. 22. At this stage of the essay, Reed explores the formalist characteristics of *Jacob's Room* but he hurriedly adds in the oncoming section of his work that in *To the Lighthouse* this method "is pushed to what has been widely judged a more successful level" (p. 22) than in the earlier novel.

of characters from the author, who supposedly has total command of his or her fictitious world.[31] Unless she approaches her theme with "a disinterested, purely aesthetic gaze"[32] she cannot reach fulfillment. From the beginning the traces of an alternative perception in the form of bodily and spatial "intimacy . . . which is knowledge" (57) preoccupy Lily, yet she is still too deeply rooted in the observation of the physical reality in a "seeing-as-having"[33] manner. The formalist representation of reality gains its completion the moment Lily "simplifies, abstracts, and adjusts her image until it attains the independence from its model that makes it neither a substitute for the unattainable Mrs. Ramsay nor a symbol of 'universal veneration,' but significant in itself as an arrangement of form. . ."[34] The condition of her "independence" is her model's absence, which enables Lily to realize her phenomenological intimacy, hence her knowability of Mrs. Ramsay and, indirectly, her own subjectivity. "Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can over-ride her wishes, improve away her limited, old-fashioned ideas. She recedes further and further from us" (190). Lily even indulges in a somewhat malicious tone while she comments on Mrs. Ramsay's "old-fashioned ideas," the most hateful of those for her being marriage.

Vision and Design: From Primordial Perception to Lived Perspective

Reed introduces Lily's emblematic closing remark "I've had my vision" (226) "as an acknowledgement that what neither they nor the reader have had is Mrs. Ramsay."[35] "Vision" is a fundamental expressive mode of the Modernists, a term adopted by Woolf as early as in her seminal essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924) in which she terms the figure of Mrs. Brown a "vision to which [she] clings though [she] know[s] no way of imparting it to the reader. . ."[36] Mrs. Brown, who appears as "a mere figment of . . . imagination,"[37] functions as a reservoir of Modernist poetics: she is eternal (80), elusive, bearing "unlimited capacity and infinite variety" (87).

31. Joplin quoted in Reed, p. 24. Joplin draws a parallel between Lily's temporary failure to grasp the meaning of Mrs. Ramsay and Erich Auerbach's similarly failed reading of Woolf and her works.

32. Reed, p. 24.

33. Reed, p. 22.

34. Reed, p. 25.

35. Reed, p. 24.

36. Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in *Collected Essays*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 319–337, p. 332.

37. Woolf, "Mr. Bennett," p. 333.

Lily's sigh of relief, appearing as a gesture of avowal with respect to the significance of vision, suggests the acknowledgement of something more than simply not having Mrs. Ramsay. Vision thus embodies the very impossibility of knowing the other through a possessive grip, which always already implies a hierarchical relationship of the I and the other, and within that relationship, of the I's mind and its body.

The ordinary subject, unlike the painter's I/eye, is not able to view his or her own self as a given presence, as a representation with which s/he can take up a position as a viewer and summon the visibles given to his or her sight. The subject calls for an auxiliary means that assists the visual command of the world's fabric, which vehicle Merleau-Ponty terms vision. "Vision is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me for being absent from myself, for being present at the fission of Being from the inside – the fission at whose termination, and not before, I come back to myself."[38] He imagines vision as something primordial to cognition and language that enables the I to experience his being-in-the-world as an absence, a paradoxical self-visualization of one's presence as an absence, as an invisibility. Each individual is a constituent part of this texture, i.e. the "simultaneity" of things, and, at the same time, one is absent to himself/herself at the moment of one's dehiscence from what Merleau-Ponty calls the "flesh" (*chair*) of the world. Vision, as M. C. Dillon formulates it in his article on Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind," "certainly functions as his chief metaphor or model for perception in general."[39] Yet things appear to perception in the Merleau-Pontian visionary mode primordially, not as the individual knows them, as one speaks about them or as consciousness reflects on them. They appear prior to the cognitive process or verbality, as pure objects of the visible. Things in their primordial state do not show themselves to the ordinary spectator since the vision of the ordinary eye is trained to view the world through representations, mediated images of reality under the manipulative control of the gaze, in the Foucauldian sense of the term. Consequently, human perception for the sake of envisaging the picture of the world needs a catalyst figure, through whom the constellation of things is developed onto the "photosensitive" surface of the canvas. The painterly vision is empowered to make the underlying structure as invisibility, the "emerging order"[40] implicated, "incrusted" (to adopt a Merleau-Pontian term here) in the visible realm accessible to all subjects. The structure of things, the togetherness of bodies, shapes, figures is always already there, obscured by my very embodiedness, my oneness with the world.

38. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 186.
39. M. C. Dillon, " 'Eye and Mind': The Intertwining of Vision and Thought," *Man and World* 13 (1980) 155–171, p. 164.
40. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 14.

"The painter's vision is not a view upon the *outside*, a merely 'physical-optical'[41] relation with the world. The world no longer stands before him through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration of coming-to-itself of the visible."[42] Lily often encounters her circumambient reality in a visionary manner expressed through images of forceful natural appearances such as "a ponderous avalanche," a dancing "company of gnats" or a "fountain spurting over" (29, 30, 174). These instances all depict her manner of realizing the world as a powerful moment of understanding, a mental mapping triggered by some visual impetus to produce/realize reality in a confluence of disseminated sensory experience. "All of this danced up and down, like a company of gnats, each separate, but all marvellously controlled in an invisible elastic net – danced up and down in Lily's mind. . ." (30).

Duality characterizes the position of the painter: s/he plunges into the flesh of the world, discerns the exteriority of his/her encompassing universe from within, in accordance with Cézanne's paradoxical observation that "[n]ature is on the inside."[43] The painterly vision, thus, illuminates our shared roots with the world, our equivalence with other things and bodies. "Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our body and because the body welcomes them."[44] Yet, this echo is triggered only through an indirect, mediated relationship the viewer establishes with the painting. The painter, in order to take a comprehensive hold on reality, on the other hand, has to estrange himself/herself from that particular segment of the world s/he is about to transform into the artistic rendition. This estrangement initiates a stare of refreshed visual capacity, dispossessed of the falsities that representation, otherwise, bestows on the world. Lily's primary experience on returning to the Ramsays' summer cottage carries a sense of radical detachment.

> The house, the place, the morning, all seemed strangers to her. She had no attachment here, she felt, no relations with it, anything might happen, and whatever did happen, a step outside, a voice calling . . . was a question, as if the link that usually bound things together had been cut, and they floated up here, down there, off, anyhow. How aimless it was, how chaotic, how unreal it was, she thought, looking at her empty coffee cup. (160)

The coherence that Mrs. Ramsay compulsively attempted to maintain in the introductory chapter is, by this time, utterly shattered. The loosened bonds prevail not

41. Merleau-Ponty adopts Paul Klee's term here.
42. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 181.
43. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 164.
44. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 164.

only in Lily's view of the scene but in Mr. Ramsay's and the children's experience, as well. All of them try to overcome this emotional, structural, existential, and phenomenological chaos, naturally, by different means. Mr. Ramsay recites poetry to surmount disorder, letting the words hover in the air, where they carry on the rigor of the poetic arrangement, the controlling power of language. Words of Cowper's poem (160, 161) infiltrate emptiness, fill up the nooks of the house and force Lily to turn the visible realm into a similarly cohesive model. She is urged to transplant the poetic composition into the visual one (161), to defy the overwhelming emptiness that stares back at her even from "her empty coffee cup" (160). She is challenged to "[exchange] the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting" (173), a mission she struggles with all through the narrative, most tangibly, however, in the closing phase that conveys a metaphysical imprint due to a constant interrogation of the self and a sense of existential doubt and anxiety. Lily exploits the potentials of her detachment to unveil the mask of familiarity of her surrounding, and "[s]he set[s] her clean canvas firmly upon the easel, as a barrier" (163). In his exploration of Cézanne's technique, Merleau-Ponty conditions the painterly access to the "deep structure" of the world on the process of defamiliarisation.

> We live in the midst of man-made objects, among tools, in houses, streets, cities, and most of the time we see them only through the human actions which put them to use. We become used to thinking that all of this exists necessarily and unshakeably. Cézanne's painting suspends these habits of thought and reveals the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself. . . . It is an unfamiliar world in which one is uncomfortable and which forbids all human effusiveness.[45]

The passage reflects upon the human existential framework as spatial, equating houses, streets, cities with objects and tools as extensions of the former. Considering the human body as yet another manifestation of spatial structures, our view is blocked by the corporeal proximity of fellow beings. The painter's primal encounter with the strangeness of the world and the depiction of this experience are what shake us as unfamiliar whenever we are confronted with a non-representational, non-mimetic work of art.[46] The spectator's astonishment originates in the crudeness of the world's primordial disposition, with which we lost our innate relationship through socialization and the employment of signifying systems like language or the perspectival pictorial tradition. "The task before him [the painter] was, first to forget

45. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 16.

46. Such an upsetting encounter is most conspicuously represented through the figure of Bankes, but Mr. Ramsay and Tansley bear similarly distrustful suppositions towards Lily's art and talent.

all he had ever learned from science and, second *through* these sciences to recapture the structure of the landscape as an emerging organism."[47] The painter has to enable himself/herself to facilitate the energies and potentials of the physical environment, and "the rules of anatomy and design"[48] even if these laws would otherwise delineate different routes to his/her brushstroke. Lily activates Mrs. Ramsay's imaginative, visionary perceptive mode as much as Mr. Ramsay's "austere . . . bare, hard, not ornamental" (170) kitchen table, the stylized symbol of his philosophical subject matter and his rational, scientific approach, a symbol offered to her by Andrew Ramsay as an ultimate clue to grasp the essence of Mr. Ramsay's scholarly work. Merleau-Ponty terms this fusion of the visionary imagination and the scientific bareness as "intuitive science,"[49] with which he characterizes Cézanne's prime interest in nature, which he expresses through a technique very far from naturalism.

> Certainly she was losing consciousness of outer things. And as she lost consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance, and whether Mr. Carmichael was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues. (174)

Lily deprives her self of the particularities that turn one into a social entity: name, personality, appearance. She, perhaps not so drastically as Cézanne, strips herself to the extent that she, basically, becomes one with "the base of inhuman nature," as Merleau-Ponty formulated the fundamental nature of the Cézannesque visuality. The flow of scenes, names, memories constitutes itself as "forms in the mind" (173), resurfacing from time to time on her mental canvas, awaiting transubstantiation onto the actual painterly surface. "To do this, all the partial views one catches sight of must be welded together; all the eye's versatility disperses must be reunited. . ."[50] Order and unity claim ground with renewed forces in "The Lighthouse" section, naturally as substitutes for the lost referential point, i.e. Mrs. Ramsay, to compensate for the commonly experienced emptiness. Lily houses sensory scraps of her individual life and also the time spent together with the Ramsays. These continually urge her to cast them into forms of substantiality, to enable them to inhabit the artistic space. Lily's painterly vision of reality is getting gradually blurred with her actual environment. She either moves to-

47. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 17.
48. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 17.
49. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 17.
50. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 17.

wards the depth of the painting ("She went on tunnelling her way into her picture, into the past" [188]) or, just the other way round, emerges from its profundity. "Against her will she had come to the surface, and found herself half out of the picture, looking, a little dazedly, as if at unreal things, at Mr. Carmichael" (193). The painted sphere replaces reality, it challenges the latter as an alternative reality. The anchoring point between the two spheres is Mr. Carmichael, the most elusive, non-realistic character. The apparent stability of Lily's physical reality, which is conditioned on Mr. Carmichael, is undermined by his very abstracted and obscure existence. This, in return, justifies the status of the painting as a legitimate surrogate for their immediate environment. Lily's vision bears a resemblance to Mrs. Ramsay's experience of ascending the stairs and reaching out to stabilize herself by grasping the branches of the trees outside.[51] Both occurrences represent the oscillation of two conventionally irreconcilable realms: the external-internal opposites, and the nature-art dichotomy.

In a conversation with Emile Bernard Cézanne straightforwardly claims that he wants to make nature and art the same, by which the two realms become interchangeable.[52] What lies in the centre of Cézanne's technique of holding a perceptive grip on the world is the reconciliation of the painter's multisensory experience of things and the apprehension of the structure that holds human vision together. A subsequent stage to this process is how he transforms his understanding of the world into visuality, with which he provides a secondary substantiality to reality. Even though this painterly vision is remodeled, it can function as primary reality for its spectators, who otherwise could not get access to the substratum of the natural scenery. In his exploration of Cézanne's aesthetics Merleau-Ponty calls this sensitivity "primordial perception,"[53] which operates as a collection of the senses, an integrated simultaneity that knows no patterns of hierarchy. Primordial vision is devoid of the selectivity of our conventionally prefigured/prescribed, hence, learnt sensory experience, since the subject is exposed to an abundance of diverse perceptive modalities. Lily once complains about the difficulty of catching a full sight of Mrs. Ramsay: "One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought" (214). What is even more significant is, however, the amalgamation of the different sensory fields in a

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51. "So she righted herself after the shock of the event, and quite unconsciously and incongruously, used the branches of the elm trees outside to help her to stabilise her position. She must get that right and that right, she thought, insensibly approving of the dignity of the trees' stillness, and now again of the superb upward rise . . . of the elm branches as the wind raised them. For it was windy (she stood a moment to look out)" (122–3).

52. Cézanne quoted in Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 13.

53. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 15.

synaesthetic fusion. Although Cézanne's artistic mission flirts with the impossible due to the omnipresence necessitated by his vision, he attempts "to portray the world, to change it completely into a spectacle, to make *visible* how the world *touches* us."[54] By mentioning the tactile sensation, considered traditionally as an inferior sense-organ, especially in comparison to sight, Merleau-Ponty reflects upon the human subject's immanence in the world, our indwelling as being perennially embraced by other objects/bodies with which we maintain an indivisible togetherness. He views the human body as "an intertwining of vision and movement,"[55] regarding the motor function as a fundamental completion of visual perception, since it is not only our eye that is moving while we look at something, but in order to monitor a more extensive segment of our environment we constantly shift the position of our body, as well. Movement constitutes the image of our spatio-corporeal mode of existence, we get a comprehensive view of others and of our own multidimensionality through getting into physical contact with things/bodies. Yet, the average corporeal entity can only take a cognitive grip upon the world as his/her own exclusive revelation of the being-one-with-the-world sensation. S/he cannot get access to the fabric of the world, to the vision incorporating a universal coexistence of the seeing/seen, touching/touched bodies. In contrast, "[t]he painter lives in fascination. The actions most proper to him – those gestures, those paths which he alone can trace and which will be revelations to others. . . – to him they seem to emanate from the things themselves, like the patterns of the constellations."[56] The painter's fascination touches upon a certain invisible presence, something covertly obtainable within visibility. The words with which Merleau-Ponty describes the painter's manner of detecting the invisible, namely, his "gestures" and "paths," reinforce the artist's corporeal motility. The painter traces the world by getting in actual, physical touch with the constituents of the world, executing a continuous apprehending movement, arresting fellow objects, things, bodies in a comprehensive grasp. Sensory experiences of an entirely different nature distil themselves as a knot tied in Lily's mind (171) which she carries herself "involuntarily, as she walked along the Brompton Road, as she brushed her hair, she found herself painting that picture, passing her eye over it, and untying the knot in imagination" (171).

While Lily accomplishes her final vision, she recaptures Mr. Ramsay's up-and-down movement (his monotonous act accompanied by the similarly automatic recitals of poetry) with reinvigorated energies: on the one hand, by "stepping to and fro from her easel" (190), on the other hand, by repeatedly turning her scrutinizing

54. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 19.
55. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 62.
56. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 167.

eyes towards the shore and spotting Mr. Ramsay's boat on the sea. Additionally, the moment she reaches certain segments of the lawn, catching sight of the hedge, for instance, she evokes memories of the past holiday she spent with the Ramsays, in this sense, linking past and present as much as her own location on the shore with the distant view of the Lighthouse or the receding family. Lily's eyes, her visual perception are assisted and partially performed in her tactile-motor activity. The imaginary knot absorbs colors, light, shapes, odors, and sounds of things before it flings itself upon the perceptive membrane of Lily's mind to be transformed into a painting. The painter's body belongs to the fabric of the knot, it is condensed from identical sensory particles of the world. André Marchand[57] tells of a similar experience concerning the encroaching relationship of painter and world: "I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it. . . . I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out."[58] At first sight it seems that Lily penetrates Charles Tansley's interiority when she "X-rays" the young man sitting across the dinner table. "Lily Briscoe knew all that. Sitting opposite him could she not see, as in an X-ray photograph, the ribs and thigh bones of the young man's desire to impress himself lying dark in the mist of his flesh – that thin mist which convention had laid over his burning desire to break into the conversation?" (99). The passage unravels the manifold corporeal being, highlighting the opacity of one's accessibility to his own phenomenal position. Lily sees Tansley's psycho-social entanglement from a bone-deep perspective due to her own viewpoint, which is in the inside of the intercorporeal flesh (in Merleau-Ponty's sense of the term). Woolf smoothly reconciles the scientific metaphor with Lily's metaphysical stance, which blending characterizes the entirety of the novel on several levels, evoking Merleau-Ponty's "intuitive science"[59] with respect to Cézanne's attempt "to recapture the structure of the landscape as an emerging organism."[60]

The difficulty of Cézanne's artistic achievement lies in its innate paradox, the tension between an irrevocably solid composition and the constantly transforming, fluid natural and physical world. Consequently, the artistic process, the continual becoming of expressive forms is an infinite emanation, an ever-renewed centrifugal radiation,

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57. French painter (1907–97), whose words appear in Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind" in which the latter quotes from Georges Charbonnier's assemblage of thirty-six radio conversations with painters of the post-war period entitled *Le monologue du peintre*. The conversations discuss impelling issues of art theory such as the question of the real and realism, or the tensions of abstraction and figuration.

58. Marchand quoted in Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy*, p. 167.

59. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 17.

60. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 17.

"the continual rebirth of existence."[61] Lily's mind purifies images and sensations – ranging from trivialities to the most compelling existential questions – into forms and solidities. "In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she [Lily] looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stands still here, Mrs. Ramsay said" (176). Mrs. Ramsay's declaratory words, as a summation of Lily's aesthetic objectives, reinforce their analogous relationship towards the end of the narrative, which correlation was established much earlier. Stability reaches its fulfillment in the mapping of the voluminosity of things and their arrangement in a "lived perspective," a constructive depth not viewed from the outside as one unified spatial perspectival depth of the painting but as a depth that is bulging into all directions from within each and every object of the artistic vision. Mrs. Ramsay's phenomenal body functions as a model for all other forms, the "triangular purple shape" as her stylized substantiation submerges as the arch form of Lily's aesthetics. The generative color arrangements provide forms with substantiality, exceeding the potentials of shapes that spring into life as a result of a clearly distinguishable outline enclosing and demarcating one space from the other without the constitutive depth. "[F]or it was bright enough, the grass still a soft deep green, the house starred in its greenery with purple passion flowers, and rooks dropping cool cries from the high blue" (24). The novel's introductory section produces a wide range of such complementary color schemes, not exclusively within Lily's artistic procedure, but on almost every layer of the narrative: from the social and emotional network of characters to the emblematic centerpiece, the rich dish of fruit at Mrs. Ramsay's ceremonious dinner party. "The razor edge of balance" (209), however, concerns different fields in the second creative phase of Lily. The emphatic distance and emptiness show reality in its misty distortion where nothing can be viewed clearly or distinctively. Life at the receding shore in Cam's vision is designated "as if people were free to come and go like ghosts" (185). Lily has to overcome the "uncompromising white stare" (171) of the canvas, the immense gaping space that threatens her with its flatness.

> Heaven be praised for it, the problem of space remained, she thought, taking up her brush again. It glared at her. The whole mass of the picture was poised upon that weight. Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses. And she began to lay on a red, a grey, and she began to model her way into the hollow there. (186)

61. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 18.

Lily describes the surface appearance of her painting almost as an Impressionist, which is not at all foreign to Cézanne's artistic vision either. "He stated that he wanted to make of Impressionism 'something solid, like the art in the museums.' "[62] What turns Cézanne's and Lily's vision into something solidified rests, however, not exclusively on the voluminosity of colors but on the "bolts of iron," the underlying structure, the "emerging order"[63] that is the outcome of the phenomenal geometry, the "intercorporeity" that the embedded artistic subjectivity's apprehension transposes into the work of art.

62. Cézanne quoted in Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 12.
63. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, p. 14.

György Kalmár

Parler-Entre-Elles

Possibilities of a Less Phallocentric Symbolic Economy in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*[1]

This paper reads *Orlando* according to post-structuralist theories of literature and subjectivity, focusing on the textual characteristics and the theoretical possibilities of what Luce Irigaray called a 'female symbolic.' I claim that when read with post-structuralist theories of literature and subjectivity, *Orlando* shows its subversive and disseminative potentials. This disseminative activity is closely connected to certain narrative characteristics, its deconstructive rhetorics, and the role the body and eroticism play in the production of meaning and subjectivity. *Orlando* is a pleasurable read in which the body becomes a central site, source, inspiration, and medium of meaning. I argue that *Orlando* creates a textual and libidinal economy that is different both from the typical patterns of modernism and, more generally, from characteristic patriarchal symbolic systems of meaning. Relying on some feminist interpretations of Lacan, I will attempt to show how different texts may negotiate different relations to the 'paternal metaphor' and therefore create different subjectivities.

> "The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do." (*Roland Barthes*)

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* embarrasses many critics. Although each and every novel of Woolf is different in its own way, it is difficult to read *Orlando* in the same way as the others: it seems to evade those well-established methods of criticism that apparently work well in the case of Woolf's other novels. Nothing indicates this better than the fact that many critics neglect this novel in their works covering Woolf's oeuvre, amongst them such noted Woolf-scholars as Mitchell A. Leaska in his *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*, or John Bachelor in his *Virginia*

1. This work is supported by the TÁMOP 4.2.1./B-09/1/KONV-2010-0007 project. The project is implemented through the New Hungary Development Plan, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

Woolf: The Major Novels. Many of those who finally undertake analysing it – David Dowling, Howard Harper, or Makiko Minow-Pinkey, for example – basically fail to step out of the good-old category of modernism, which often prevents them from taking notice of such characteristics of the novel as its strong narrative drive, the importance of metafiction and its parody of different styles and discourses, not to mention the particular interrelations of love, desire and disseminative writing. As a few exceptional analyses like that of Keith M. Booker prove, these can only be productively accounted for in a critical framework that is *post* modernism and structuralism. This is precisely what this paper undertakes: reading *Orlando* according to post-structuralist theories of literature and subjectivity, focusing on the textual characteristics and the theoretical possibilities of what (following Luce Irigaray) I would hypothetically call a 'female symbolic.'

I agree with Julia Kristeva that theories of textuality and narrative are always (already) theories of subjectivity as well,[2] therefore my aim is to relate the novel's narrative-rhetorical characteristics to theories of subjectivity. I will try to demonstrate that *Orlando* is an odd one out in Woolf's oeuvre, a text that works differently: one where the 'typical' questions with which criticism approaches her texts (such as gender, subjectivity, art and one's relation to a social-symbolic order) are inscribed in a different, yet no less exciting or subversive way. I will argue that this 'other Woolf' (that criticism often avoided without any explanation, and Woolf herself also repudiated later) is at least as radical and productive from both theoretical and political points of view as the more characteristically modernist one.

I claim that when read with post-structuralist theories of literature and subjectivity, *Orlando* shows its subversive and disseminative potentials. This disseminative activity is closely connected to certain narrative characteristics, its deconstructive rhetorics, and the role the body and eroticism play in the production of meaning and subjectivity. *Orlando* is a pleasurable read in which the body becomes a central site, source, inspiration, and medium of meaning. I argue (*contra* Booker) that *Orlando* creates a textual and libidinal economy that is different from the typical patterns of both modernism and, more generally, typical patriarchal symbolic systems of meaning.[3] Relying on some feminist interpretations of Lacan, I will argue that the field of meaning (*contra* Lacan) is not necessarily that of castration, but may also be something considerably different, what Derrida in

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2. See Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1980), p. 124.

3. See M. Keith Booker, "What's the Difference? Carnivalization of Gender in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*," *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literature: Transgression, Abjection and the Carnivalesque* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991), 162–185, p. 173.

Writing and Difference characterised as "the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of the world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin. . ."[4]

The Pleasure of the Text

In order to understand the playful joys of *Orlando*, and the ways pleasure may turn into an (dis-)organizing principle, it might be helpful to refer to the distinction that Roland Barthes makes between texts of bliss and texts of pleasure:

> Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.[5]

I would argue that while most of Woolf's writings are texts of bliss (and what is more, they are exactly the kind of texts of modernism that gave birth to these categories, that made critics distinguish between worthy and enjoyable texts), *Orlando* may either be a text of pleasure, or (in a more radical reading) one deconstructive of Barthes's dichotomy. At first glance *Orlando* is an example of texts of pleasure. But if one takes a closer look and examines its rhetoric and figurativity, one may realise that in *Orlando* the 'logic' of texts of pleasure is taken to its ultimate point, creating what Luce Irigaray would call a 'female symbolic system,' driven by pleasure, love and desire. *Orlando* offers a symbolic economy different from the (patriarchal, repressive, phallocentric) symbolic, a language that not only tolerates, but also notoriously accumulates logical contradictions, a language in which difference works in other ways than in (what Derrida and Irigaray call the) economies of the proper. The text constantly confuses basic dichotomies of the (patriarchal) symbolic and disregards such axioms of it as the unity of the self, the unity and univocal nature of sexual identity, and the ability of the narrator to exercise mastery over the text. In other words, while the novel may appear to please and entertain us without really challenging the existing order (like texts of pleasure), actually it takes the reader away from the properly castrated (that is, from what is castrated by the order of the

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4. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 292.

5. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 14.

proper): in my opinion, *Orlando* is not simply a *fantasy* of wholeness, but it creates an economy of meaning, a different signifying economy.

Orlando is not only fuelled by pleasure, but also by libidinal energies and desires (the desires of narrative, the body and the unconscious), and also that of a different kind of subjectivity. This is the basic set of notions which should open new spaces for the novel's meanings. Barthes's words at the beginning of this paper indicate how deeply all these above concepts are connected: he connects pleasure with the loss of control, the loss of mastery, and the body. In the pleasure of the text the (patriarchal) Law becomes a more flexible playfield, and the body (together with the drives connected to it) can join discourse. The reader is simply *lost* in the pleasurable text, one loses oneself in it. This seems to make sense from a psychoanalytical perspective in which it is only intensive joy or pain that can loosen the grip of the symbolic: in *Orlando* the mixing of the reader and the text (which is the crucial act of the birth of this kind of aesthetic experience) happens through intensive pleasure. Thus, the pleasure of the text is also an erotic pleasure as it stems from the pleasure of union, the union of the text, the reader and his/her (repressed) other. As Peter Brooks says, satisfaction is a "surrender to otherness,"[6] where the reading self surrenders to the otherness of the text and (at least partly) to the formless inner otherness that is normally covered by the coherent (castrated) subject. This surrender to the other, this loss of the self is the satisfaction caused by and felt in the pleasure of the text.

I would argue that *Orlando* reveals something that most post-structuralist theoreticians forget; I think that *Orlando* and Barthes know something about the flexibility and openness of both meaning and subjectivity that Lacan does not seem to: that we like to play, and when we are absorbed in joyful play we feel and *are* different. The game we play refigures the symbolic for a time together with the subject. It is an ironic characteristic of psychoanalytical theory that while it presents a de-centred, split subject, it also conceptualises the symbolic order, the field of meaning in which that subjectivity takes shape, as (almost completely) unified and (potentially) trans-historical. Texts like *Orlando* may point out that the field of meaning and the subject may be much more flexible, open and shifting than mainstream accounts of psychoanalytic theory usually describe it.

Let us see how the game this text plays rewrites certain elements and mechanisms of the patriarchal symbolic. Maybe it is best to start with the most obvious one, the problem of gender identity. What may strike the reader first is that Orlando does not seem to have the coherent, unchanging, 'proper' identity that 'normal'

6. Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), p. 9.

people (or characters) have.[7] "When you meet someone, the first distinction you make is 'male or female?' and you are accustomed to make this distinction with unhesitating certainty" – says Freud in his (in)famous lecture on femininity.[8] Yet, Orlando's gender identity – or better say the naturalness of 'his' gender identity – is questioned by the very first sentence of the novel: "He – for there could be no doubt about his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it – was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters."[9] As Booker correctly notes, "this declaration of Orlando's gender is highly ironic: there is in fact a great deal of doubt about his sex, and the entire fabric of the text is permeated with images of ambiguous gender."[10] In other words, by affirming something – Orlando's gender identity – that should be obvious and natural, the text brings it into question and de-stabilises its very naturalness. The gender identity of Orlando, and the duality of his identity and appearance become an open question from the very first sentence of the novel on, an obscure place in the signifying process in which desire can be born. The text does not say that it could not be known whether Orlando was a boy or a girl, but creates a world in which these concepts need explanations, words, descriptions, and focus an erotically charged attention on the body. In this way *Orlando* does not simply subvert the patriarchal symbolic order (of "unhesitating certainty") thematically, but also teaches the reader to think in terms of a language which is different from the Oedipal order.

The strong narrative drive, one of the most important characteristics of texts of pleasure, is also typical of *Orlando*, which never frustrates its reader, but always remains enjoyable, understandable and seductive, constantly feeding and teasing the reader's epistemophilia and scopophilia. Through these pleasures the reader gets erotically invested in a text that French feminist writers would call a piece of *écriture feminine*, a text that diverges from the patriarchal symbolic on both the imaginary and symbolic registers. In Moi's description,

> It is a writing which finds its source and character in the half-repressed libidinal drives of the girl child for the mother. . . . Not only is such a writing essentially different from male writing, it is also a de-cerebralised writing,

7. Here and on the following pages I use the term 'proper' and 'proper identity' as it appears in Luce Irigaray's and Jacques Derrida's critique of phallogocentrism. In *This Sex Which is Not One*, Irigaray connects a certain philosophy of the 'proper' with the patriarchal myths of the one truth, one sexual organ, and one (proper) meaning. See *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1985), p. 26.

8. Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 146.

9. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 11.

10. Booker, p. 182.

> which takes its energies from the sexual pleasures of the body. The phrase that recurs as a near synonym of *écriture feminine* is the phrase 'writing the body'. . . . To 'write the body' is to seek to recover the inhabited, repressed, forgotten, lost desire for the mother and the mother's body, which the Symbolic Order of language has superseded.[11]

In my opinion, the most radical potential of the concept of *écriture feminine*, just like Derrida's concept of writing, is that these are theories of difference *within* the field of meaning: these concepts are capable of rewriting Lacan's binary system in which meaning, symbolic economies and subjectivity are always necessarily connected to being subjected to oedipalisation, castration, lack, and the phallus, while everything outside this (unhappy, phallocentric) system are also placed outside meaning and subjectivity in general (and associated with fantasy or psychoses). I think *Orlando* calls attention to the theoretical necessity for us to replace this inside/outside model with one that is able to account for a variety of different economies of meaning and different subjectivities.

Desire and the Text

What can be known about the birth of *Orlando* (about the con-*text*, texts written by Woolf, contemporaries, critics, and biographers) seems to suit well the above-outlined ideas of pleasurable loss in a different order of meaning. What is more, the way the text and its con-text relate to each other in the case of *Orlando* may deconstruct our ('proper') ideas about the (theoretically) distinct categories of author, implied author and narrator.

Woolf started writing *Orlando* in the winter of 1927, when Vita (Victoria Sackville-West), who is usually referred to as her greatest love, went travelling with her husband. That is the reason why Nigel Nicolson could call the novel "the longest and most charming love letter in literature."[12] So, on the one hand, the text is a love letter, a piece of writing between two women in love, *parler-entre-elles,* as Irigaray would call it, a text written in the specific feminine language of the couple;[13] on the other hand, it is also a substitute for the missing object of desire. One could say that

11. Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 6.

12. See Sherron E. Knopp " 'If I saw you would you kiss me?' Sapphism and Subversiveness of Virginia Woolf's Orlando," in *Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing*, ed. Joseph Bristow (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 111.

13. See Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 199.

Woolf wrote *Orlando* (for herself) because of the lack of Vita, as a surrogate. In this case the novel is a metaphor or textual displacement of the object of desire: the body of the text is analogous to the body of the loved one. Naming, telling, narrating something in this sense also means possessing it: telling (the story of) the object of desire means having that object.[14] Obviously, this may be one of the sources of the pervasive pleasures of the novel, pleasures that spread easily from the narrator to the reader.

The crucial point to see here is that these are not 'just' metaphors of love, just as these pleasures are not bookish or dry at all. The object's being made up of figures of speech does not differ much from 'ordinary' situations of love: according to post-structuralist theoreticians of love and desire like Lacan or Catherine Belsey, these feelings are very much based on seeing the object through certain kinds of figures of speech.[15] In the Lacanian sense there is no language without desire (to tell, to know, to be recognised by the other), and there is equally no desire without language. As Lacan's analysis of courtly love aptly demonstrates in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, distance and figurativity only increase desire, as they delay its fulfilment, so much so that courtly love may be called a "poetic exercise."[16]

In other words, *Orlando* shows, displays, focuses on Orlando's body, but this appearance of presence through words and figures of speech talks about the absence of the original object, which is the precondition of desire in the first place. This paradoxical situation is equal to saying that an object of desire is always present and absent, always bodily and figurative, whether encountered in a book or in a bed.

This way the novel also stages the acts of desire, 'knowing,' and the constant refiguring of subjectivity by desire, and desire by language. As the sight of the naked body is often less erotic than the gap between two pieces of clothes (to use Barthes's example), the game of concealing and revealing also becomes more exciting and pleasurable than showing the object in its 'nakedness' would be. It also has to be noted that according to psychoanalysis the final object of desire can never be shown: it is unnameable and terrifying at the same time. The original object shown in itself is a Medusa-head, which can be watched only in the mirror of one's shield, as it was by Hercules. This prohibition, and the necessity that the text be something that shields, mirrors, and refigures at the same time, defines the basic semantic and rhetorical strategies of the novel. As Peter Brooks puts it:

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14. Brooks, pp. 19–20.

15. See Catherine Belsey, *Desire. Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 34.

16. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York and London: Norton, 1997), p. 148.

> It is as if the frustrated attempt to fix the body in the field of vision set off the restless movement of narrative, telling the story of approach to, and swerve away from, that final object of sight that cannot be contemplated. Direct contemplation would be petrifying, producing a Medusa-body, as in some of Balzac's scenarios. Narrative is thus generated as both approach and avoidance, the story of desire that never can quite speak its name nor quite attain its object.[17]

Another reason why nudity is less exciting than the game that constantly conceals and reveals its *objet petit a*, as Lacan calls it, is that nudity may cut short fantasy and figurative meaning, the things that can transform the object into (the illusion of) the original object of desire.

The diary entries and letters of Woolf also show how closely connected *Orlando* is with love and pleasure: "I am so engulfed in Orlando I can think of nothing else. . . . I make it up in bed at night, as I walk the streets, everywhere. I want to see you in the lamplight, in your emeralds. In fact I have never more wanted to see you than I do now."[18] It seems that the textualisation of desire liberates both the narrative and desire. Sexual and textual desires transform into each other. The strength of narration, the vigorous style of the work, the love of words and the unmistakable joy of the (implied) writer in her work all seem to come from this eroticism. This liberation and textualisation of her desires was as sudden a turn for (the implied) Woolf as the previous repression was strong: "[*Orlando* was] extraordinary unwilled by me but potent in its own right . . . as if it shoved everything aside to come into existence."[19] All these words are very telling: *Orlando* was not intended by Woolf, and one can emphasise either the word "unwilled" here, as Woolf *did not intend it*, or the words "by me," as *it was not Woolf* who intended the birth of the work (but an internal *other*).

The way Woolf comments on her work is no less telling. She often calls it a joke, a farce, a writer's holiday or an escapade.[20] These expressions and the fact that she later distanced herself from her work emphasise the novel's difference from the rest of the oeuvre.[21] Calling *Orlando* a joke is telling not only because it means that

17. Brooks, p. 103.

18. Knopp, p. 112.

19. Knopp, p. 125.

20. See Makiko Minow-Pinkey, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987), p. 118.

21. Woolf's ambiguous relation to her novel, her mad enthusiasm and later rejection can be well followed in her diaries; cf. Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1982). On both 20 June, and 27 November 1928 she wrote that she was "sick of *Orlando*" (pp. 126, 131), but her entry on 21 April 1928 is also very telling (p. 124).

the novel is different, but also because such an underestimation of the work can also be read as a defensive technique to distance the text's pleasures from the subject who feels threatened by them. At the same time this underestimation sets the text free from the critical eye of the Law: the jester's cap may serve as defence, and may open spaces for a different (and more pleasurable) economy of writing.

This joyful view of life, the view that created *Orlando*, seems to have lasted only for a short time in Woolf's life. Apparently only love and free writing, and especially the alliance of the two, could bring about this sunny spell, when pleasure and her wishes and desires overcame anxiety and the strength of the Law. Woolf's diary, her many attempts to commit suicide and finally her tragic (ritualistic?) death seem to indicate that her 'real' life, her life under the Law (of the Father) was not like this. The writer of *Orlando*, the one celebrating life (celebrating '*Vita*') was only the *other* Virginia Woolf, her *other*, unrealisable self, and so *Orlando* as well is an *other text* in her life. Woolf could not fashion her life like this text, or maybe she could only do so as long as the novel was being written. This could be the reason why she denied the novel when the (partly erotic) pleasures of writing were over.

Pleasurable Antecedents

The category of pleasure points towards the sub-literary and pre-literary antecedents of the novel. If one compares the way language works in folk- and fairy-tales (for example, the pleasurable and self-confident position offered by the genre to its narrators and readers/listeners)[22] to *Orlando*'s way of narcissistically wallowing in styles and words, one may come to the conclusion that the tradition of oral story-telling is as important an antecedent to the novel as the works of Defoe and Sterne.[23]

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume a strict analogy between tales and this "radically antigeneric" novel,[24] in which "the subversion of genre conventions" is so pervasive.[25] Although the way the text creates its symbols is similar to the symbolism of tales and its world-view and treatment of time are also often magical, the free flow of *Orlando*'s narration is far from observing the strict formal

22. According to many folk-tale critics, narrative pleasure, the ease of story-telling, and the confident relationship to language are essential components of the folk and fairy tale genres. See, for example, Richard Mercer Dorson, *Folktales Told around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. xvii.

23. Defoe's 'readerly' texts may be regarded to be antecedents because of their love of 'strong' narration and love of the exotic, while Sterne is influential in the importance of metafiction and ironic tone.

24. Booker, p. 164.

25. Booker, p. 165.

(morphological) rules of fairy tales (as analysed by Vladimir Propp). Another difference is that the fantastic element is always accompanied by the irony of the intellect, which makes the figure of irony undercut the most frequent rhetorical devices of the text. This playful, half-serious, half ironic tone results in the play of assertion and denial, which does not let the semantic field become restricted to any homogenous 'message' or style: "the combination of seriousness and comedy in a single work is . . . one of the many ways in which normal hierarchical distinctions are abolished in this subversive book."[26] Undercutting, ridiculing, and deconstructing its own statements, the text also deconstructs the tradition of taking a coherent speaking position. Whereas fairy tales create a coherent anti-world with its own laws, *Orlando* plays with the symbolic, asserts it, denies it, ridicules it, then questions its denial and so on, *ad infinitum*. As a result of this rhetorical strategy, by way of constantly changing its viewpoints, leaving a hint of irony or playfulness behind every statement, playing off one argument against the other then *vice versa*, by way of leaving no rule unchallenged, no speaking position unquestioned, *Orlando* negotiates a specific relation to the patriarchal symbolic, and writes (amongst other things) difference, pleasure, and the possibility of complete happiness into it.

It is worth mentioning that in the original edition (as well as in the Penguin edition) photographs of Vita were to illustrate the events of Orlando's life, and many at the time – those in the know – criticised the novel for relying too much on the history of Vita's family and her personality. Counter to these arguments, I would suggest that mixing 'reality' with fiction may be a subversive strategy that actually liberates the text from the law of the proper. Orlando is (always already) Vita, just as Vita is always already Orlando, made of words, figures, language: the self and the other, life and fiction are inextricably interwoven. It is this mixing of (theoretically) distinct and separated orders that liberates the narrative, that enables it to present a different Vita, *Vita* (life) *avec différance*, that sunny, loving, joyous other that flirts with the Law and makes fun of it at the same time.[27] The symbolic cannot be deconstructed by creating an (imaginary) anti-world that simply opposes it, as these worlds are easily appropriated by the symbolic, placed into the categories of fiction, myth, wishful fantasy or fairy-tale. Nevertheless, using the elements of the symbolic construct called 'reality' while speaking from a position that makes 'proper' identification impossible may change the symbolic from the inside.

There is another literary tradition that can strongly be felt in *Orlando*, one that becomes especially significant when seen from the perspective of pleasure: the

26. Booker, p. 169.

27. I use the term 'other' in the Lacanian sense, where the other as object of desire (as opposed to the 'big' Other of the Law) is usually written as 'other' (autre).

genre of the picaresque. *Orlando* is often called a picaresque novel, and it is not only the motif of the travelling hero going through loosely connected adventures and the simple, linear plot that makes it that, but something more significant as well: the status of the hero in the narrative, and, inseparably from this, the relation of the hero to the narrator.

The *picaro* is the centre of the picaresque world. (S)he is a kind of alter-ego of the narrator, what is more, usually one enjoying the goodwill of his/her creator. This playful and pleasurable multiplication of the 'proper' self is precisely what happens in the novel: the alter-ego hero is 'alter', that is an/the *other* and 'ego', that is, connected to the self at the same time. The erotically invested play of these (at least) two has been recognised as the (dis-)organising principle of the text. As I have already argued, the symbolic cannot be transgressed or changed either by the discourse of the well-organised self, or by that of the absolute other, the Real Thing, since it is unnameable (the Medusa head). But *Orlando* does not use the strategy of opposition: it rather multiplies the characters of a play of love in a way that makes clean and proper distinctions impossible.

The *picaro* ("for there could be no doubt about his sex") lives and travels in a world from which all limiting forces (for example patriarchal Law) are either excluded, or subjected to the rules of this world: familiarised, 'processed' through figurativity, and tamed. Thus, the picaresque presents a world that is particularly restricted 'vertically': in its world written by love and desire the superego and the Father lose their strength and fearfulness. In other words, love and desire (understood, following Lacan and Belsey, as always already textual, rhetorical and figurative operations) may create intelligent discourses, characters, and subjectivity that are different from the ones produced under the reign of the Name of the Father. It is only the pre-oedipal mother and the (not properly gendered) child that live here, side by side, in this space of pleasure, play, and continuous, "innocent" becoming. There is nothing in the novel that could really hurt the hero(ine), that could take away his or her pleasures. Whatever may happen, (s)he will be safe as (s)he cannot lose the narrator's love.

The narrator's and the hero(ine)'s closeness and inseparability become particularly apparent in certain cases. For example, on one of the first pages of the novel one may read about Orlando writing his works. The text talks about him in the third person singular; the relation of the narrator and the hero does not apparently transgress the traditions established by the 19th-century novel. Then the narrator, explaining what Orlando does, starts discussing the relationship between nature and art, during which the roles of the narrator, the hero and the implied reader – which a minute ago were connected only by the intimate tone – get peculiarly mixed:

> He was describing, as all young poets are for ever describing, nature, and in order to match the shade of green precisely he looked (and here he showed more accuracy than most) at the thing itself, which happened to be a laurel bush growing beneath the window. After that, of course, he could write no more. Green in nature is one thing, green in literature, another. Nature and letters seem to have a natural antipathy; bring them together and they tear each other to pieces. The shade of green Orlando now saw spoilt his rhyme and split his metre. Moreover, nature has tricks of her own. Once look out of a window at bees among flowers, at a yawning dog, at the sun setting, once think 'how many more suns shall I see set', etc.etc. (the thought too well known to be worth writing out) and one drops the pen, takes one's cloak, strides out of the room, and catches one's foot on a painted chest as one does so. For Orlando was a trifle clumsy.[28]

In this paragraph the roles of narrator, hero and implied reader slide into each other. First, the narrator talks about Orlando, then a change comes, which can be interpreted in different ways. "Once look out of the window. . ." may still be the words of the narrator, it may refer to all three of them, including the reader. In this case the final sentence of the paragraph would signify the implied reader's (Vita's) being close to Orlando.[29] But there is another possible interpretation, according to which during the discussion of the relations of nature and art the point of view changes from that of the narrator to that of Orlando. In this case the part starting with "Once look out of a window. . ." is the direct internal monologue of Orlando, which changes back only with the last sentence.

Treating the roles of the narrator, the hero(ine) and the implied reader in such a way is an important strategy of the playful and joyful freedom of the text (which is connected to that of the hero(ine) and the narrator). What we see at such points of the text is a dissolving of identity and fixed structural positions, an abolition of the clean boundaries of dichotomies (constitutive of logocentrism) similar to what the Barthes-motto described in connection with the pleasure of the text. In order to understand the possibility and the workings of such a discourse distanced from the reign of the phallus, let us examine the novel from the point of view offered by French feminism.

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28. Woolf, p. 13.

29. This also seems to underline the similarities between *Orlando*'s rhetorics and that of love letters. When writing love letters, one also often addresses the same person one is writing about (e.g. adoringly): I love you, I describe in a letter how I see you, and finally I send it to you with the hope that it will make you love me too.

The Female Imaginary

The above textual processes often give the impression of a free, joyful play to the reader. As I have argued, the novel can be seen as a different kind of writing that is practiced by (or produces) different forms of subjectivity. This space created by this other kind of writing is structured differently than 'proper' (logocentric, oedipalised) novels: *Orlando* makes sense, yet it seems to manage to maintain a distance from what Lacan calls the Name-of-the-Father. *Theoretically* this verges on the impossible – at least according to Lacan's original doctrine. In the classical Lacanian sense, access to meaning and subjectivity is granted only through the paternal metaphor and the paternal Law. It is this phallic Law that separates the child from the mother, that oedipalises him/her, and without this there is no meaning, no symbolic, no structure, and no 'proper' (castrated) subject.

I would argue that it is exactly this rigid view that *Orlando* challenges. In my opinion, the novel may give us clues about how a distance from the paternal metaphor may be negotiated, how a different textual economy (producing different forms of subjectivity) may work. This way the novel may be of key theoretical importance regarding the reinterpretation and feminist appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Distance from the Name-of-the-Father appears on many levels, not only in the novel's rhetoricity (seen above), but also thematically. The most outstanding thematic characteristic is probably the (almost) complete absence of Orlando's father in the novel. But it is not only the biological father, the physical embodiment and executive of the Law that is missing from the text, but also all his substitutes and metaphors, first of all what Western philosophy calls *logos*. There is nothing in the text that could limit Orlando in his freedom: no father, no mother, no law, no customs, and no regularities of the 'real world' such as being bound to one gender identity or to the human life-span rendered to ordinary beings. Apparently, Orlando is not subjected to history, rationality, social norms, or gender roles. (S)he changes roles and identities with ease: (s)he can be male, female, romantic poet and perfect ambassador, English lord or wandering gypsy. And – as it has been shown above – the same goes for the language of the text as well, with its "highly literal heteroglossic mixtures of languages,"[30] its shifting speaking positions that deconstruct traditional dichotomies, and the notion of any kind of fixed speaking position. Thus, Orlando the character and *Orlando* the novel seem to enjoy the same kind of freedom.

In my opinion, this different textuality and different subjectivity can still be explained in (more or less) Lacanian terms. According to Lacan, it is language that

30. Booker, p. 178.

creates and maintains the (paternal) symbolic order, what tears the child from the pre-oedipal world while giving it a 'proper' identity, but this does not necessarily mean that the space of writing is entirely under the reign of the phallus. One thing that may point towards this openness of texts is that in Lacan's account language is always the "discourse of the Other" in which different (imaginary and symbolic, conscious and unconscious) elements may mix, enabling language always to say something other than what it appears to say.

Numerous Lacan texts would support such an interpretation. The connection between language and subjectivity does not only mean that the subject is "a slave of language,"[31] but also that this subject is defined through one's utterances. When Lacan argues that"[t]he form in which language is expressed itself defines subjectivity,"[32] this also means that subjectivity changes together with the linguistic forms that create it. In other words, if (phallogocentric) language is performative in the sense of creating (oedipalised) subjectivity, why could not different linguistic forms create different (less oedipalised, more pleasure-oriented) kinds of subjectivities? As Booker convincingly argues,

> if, as Lacan has emphasised, the human subject is constituted in and by language, then these assaults on the integrity of monologic language should have incontestable implications for the traditional notion of the stable, autonomous self as well. Indeed, Woolf's attack on conventional models of subjectivity is the most subversive element in *Orlando*. . .[33]

The following passage from Lacan discusses precisely this problem:

> In order to know how to reply to the subject in analysis, the procedure is to recognize first of all the place where his *ego* is, the *ego* that Freud himself defined as an *ego* formed of a verbal nucleus; in other words, to know through whom and for whom the subject poses *his question*. So long as this is not known, there will be the risk of a misunderstanding concerning the desire that is there to be recognized and concerning the object to whom this desire is addressed.[34]

This passage defines subjectivity through language, desire, and the other that the subject turns to with her or his question. In Lacanian theory subjectivity is always defined in relation to an *other* or others (like Mom, Dad, the mirror image, the

31. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: Norton, 1977), p. 148.
32. Lacan, *Écrits* p. 85.
33. Booker, p. 179.
34. Lacan, *Écrits* p. 89.

object of desire, the psychoanalyst, etc.). Although psychoanalysis, I would argue, tends to define and prescribe which 'other' has to be the focal point of the subject's identity at a certain stage of development, the importance of these different 'others' may very well vary in the case of different subjects, texts, or situations. I would argue that extraordinary situations, like being in love, or reading Virginia Woolf may easily entail the re-organisation of these structures of subjectivity and otherness: being human may be a being-towards-another, but it makes a whole lot of difference whether the other that the subject poses one's question and desire to is the Father of the Law (the Lacanian 'Other'), the pre-oedipal mother (the Lacanian other), or (as in *Orlando*) a same-sex object of desire (a sort of otherness that may undermine the phallogocentric edifice).

But this is not all (*pas tout*). The above analysed formal (rhetorical, grammatical, narratological, and stylistic) characteristics of the text do not fully explain the theoretical background of why and how a piece of writing may negotiate a distanced, dis-placed position from the Name-of-the-Father. I believe that the best answers are to be found in French feminism. As Julia Kristeva and other (mostly feminist) psychoanalytic thinkers have argued, the (m)other and the body always remain there in language, behind it, woven into it, haunting it. As is well-known, in *Desire in Language* Kristeva tries to theorise this "*heterogeneousness* to meaning and signification" through the concept of the semiotic (*le sémiotique*), as a "signifying disposition"[35] or "activity"[36] that is different from the symbolic one,[37] a disposition that Kristeva (in surprising agreement with what has been established about *Orlando*) associates with the maternal, "the instinctual drives' body,"[38] and a more heterogeneous form of subjectivity that she calls the "subject-in-process."[39]

Probably the other most important attempt at theorising spaces of meaning 'beyond the phallus' is that of another French feminist psychoanalytical thinker, Luce Irigaray, who in *Speculum of the Other Woman* and, especially, in *This Sex Which is Not One* explicitly tries to lay the theoretical bases of a "feminine symbolic system."[40] In Irigaray's view (just as in that of Hélene Cixous) the imaginary plays a central role in this project, since it may work as the source of a potentially

35. Kristeva, p. 133.
36. Kristeva, p. 136.
37. Kristeva, pp. 133–134.
38. Kristeva, p. 135.
39. Kristeva, p. 135.
40. See Rosi Braidotti, "The Politics of Ontological Difference," in *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Teresa Brennan (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 89–105, p. 96 and Margaret Whitford, "Rereading Irigaray," in Brennan, 106–126, p. 118.

subversive resignification and reshaping of the symbolic. This is possible because, according to Lacan, the child preserves the imaginary (that organised the subject in its pre-oedipal dyadic closeness with the mother) in itself all its life; it is preserved in the unconscious together with the image of the pre-oedipal ('phallic') mother. In *This Sex* "Irigaray begins to use the term more extensively"[41]: it signifies less and less "the unconscious phantasy of any one individual," and it refers more and more to "a social, cultural, and philosophical fantasy, implied by the symbolic order in which we live: the unconscious phantasies[42] of the dominant discourse and their concrete embodiments."[43] In post-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory the imaginary often becomes a potentially subversive register: it is made of unconscious fantasies (often connected to the pre-oedipal stage) that shape and influence the symbolic structures in which they are (more or less secretly) inscribed. This concept of the imaginary enables theory to conceptualise the field of meaning as more flexible, heterogeneous, and changing; open and flexible enough to be able to account for such divergences from dominant (thoroughly oedipalised) discourses as *Orlando*.

The way the imaginary works according to Lacan – that it disregards logic and dichotomies, that it is entirely pleasure-driven, that it knows no lack, that it is always being related to the (m)other, to the loved one – seems to be very similar to the way *Orlando* works. One of the notable places that can strongly support the interpretation of the novel as a discourse strongly influenced by the imaginary, the body, and desire is the scene in which Orlando changes sex. Obviously, in *Orlando* "the boundaries of gender itself are challenged, carnivalized, and exposed as arbitrary social constructions" (Booker 163), so much so that one has the feeling that "Woolf also prefigures Lacan in her emphasis on the multiple and split nature of the psyche."[44] By way of changing his sex (and by way of keeping his/her gender identity undecidable), Orlando successfully avoids a fixed, 'proper' place and identity in the symbolic order and marks his/her affinity with another, more open and heterogeneous signifying economy. Together with Irigaray, in whose writings the demarcation between the imaginary and the symbolic becomes blurred, I would argue that the idea of a female imaginary is not only theoretically feasible, but also entails the possibility of a female symbolic, that is, a relatively different symbolic order influenced and shaped by the fundamental fantasies of a female imaginary. I agree with Whitford that "one cannot think the

41. Whitford, "Rereading Irigaray," p. 118.
42. In Lacan, 'phantasy' is a psychoanalytical *terminus technicus* that usually refers specifically to unconscious phantasies, while 'fantasy' is used in a more general sense.
43. Whitford, "Rereading Irigaray," p. 118.
44. Booker, p. 181.

female imaginary without thinking the female symbolic,"[45] and if the body shapes thinking and fantasies as Peter Brooks argues,[46] then characteristically different bodies may shape thinking in characteristically different ways.

Metonymic Speech and the Body

From the perspective of the above theoretical considerations *Orlando* appears like a highly eroticised text where (in the constitutive distance from the phallus) the imaginary, the unconscious, and the drives of the body take unusually active parts in producing joyful, disseminative writing. It may be fruitful to recall at this point that Barthes's favourite metaphor in the description of the pleasure of the text is also the eroticised body:

> Is not the most erotic portion of the body *where the garment gapes?* . . . it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.[47]

One may perceive a very similar economy of pleasure, seeing, and knowledge in *Orlando*: the play of showing and concealing the object of desire and/or knowledge is a recurrent strategy (such as in the descriptions of Orlando or the Russian princess), but this strategy also seems to regulate the relationship of the Law and the subject of pleasure, or the economy of knowledge and uncertainty. That is the reason why omission becomes one of the most important rhetorical vehicles of the novel: the reader often does not get fully satisfying descriptions, explanations, or motivations of characters of the kind that realism made us grow accustomed to. Consequently, *Orlando* creates the impression that there is nothing like ultimate truth, psychological coherence, or a deep essential logic behind events. The same may be said about the erotic parts: it is not only in the more intimate scenes that the narrator cuts away, but she also avoids the overtly erotic parts in the (frequent) descriptions of Orlando's body.

One of the most conspicuous poetic vehicles of the text is in close connection with this. In the subtly eroticised text of *Orlando* the object of desire is something highly rhetorical and figurative. We never see 'the essential thing' or the ultimate truth in its 'nakedness': things are always covered, displaced, substituted by decep-

45. Whitford, "Rereading Irigaray," p. 118.
46. Brooks, p. 17.
47. Barthes, pp. 9–10.

tive figurations. The text, in a radically anti-essentialist manner, keeps talking about Orlando's *body* instead of him/her. However, Orlando's body is not shown naked either; the most often used metonymy (or synecdoche) of his/her body is that of the legs, which appear many times and often play important roles in the story. Sometimes, however, the text does not stop even here, but talks about desire through another metonymy – Orlando's clothes. This is another sense in which the novel establishes the discourse of the body: the signs of the novel are written on the bodies of the characters. In other words, the text (dis-)places the object of desire (and knowledge together with it) in a series of substitutions, displacements, metaphors and metonymies.

The scene when Orlando meets Queen Elizabeth may be a fine example. In the discourse of the body in general, and here as well, the spectacle is of prime importance, as the desired body is put on stage in the field of vision. The importance of the sight of the body and the logic of metonymy are spectacularly connected here:

> Such was his [Orlando's] shyness that he saw no more of her [the Queen] than her ringed hand in water; but it was enough. It was a memorable hand; a thin hand with long fingers always curling as if round orb or sceptre; a nervous, crabbed, sickly hand; a commanding hand, too; a hand that had only to raise itself for a head to fall; a hand, he guessed, attached to an old body that smelt like a cupboard in which furs are kept in camphor; which body was yet caparisoned in all sorts of brocades and gems; and held itself very upright though perhaps in pain from sciatica; and never flinched though strung together by a thousand fears; and the Queen's eyes were light yellow.[48]

The passage illustrates perfectly how the body speaks. Basically it uses metonymies, and with the help of synecdoches it shows the whole in the part. If one is to believe Freud and Barthes, behind this characteristic of the discourse of the body one finds the prohibition of showing the whole and the naked: revealing the ultimate object of desire is not only a blasphemy, a taboo, but more importantly an essentialist gesture of someone (like Nietzsche's "dogmatic philosopher" in *Beyond Good and Evil*) who does not know anything about woman or knowing. Such a clumsy (essentialist, dogmatic, metaphysical) gesture could no doubt extinguish desire. It is also interesting in the above passage that even death is signified by a synecdoche from the field of the body, when instead of an execution it mentions the fall of a head.

One might ask why this high extent of rhetoricity and figuration is there in the representation of the Queen, why the signifying chain is extended to such a length

48. Woolf, pp. 16–17.

by the metonymies of the body. The Queen is not the object of desire for Orlando, or for the narrator. I think it is exactly this characteristic of the text that should call our attention to the importance of the Queen's character. The Queen as a symbol may signify the great mother (of life), the starting-point of all life and things, power, wisdom, and the *phallus*. She is the one who donates lands to Orlando, to her favourite; in a way she is the one who sets the story off. She is the ancestress and the donor of Orlando's story, and as there is not much about Orlando's mother in the novel, she also fulfils that function. In other words, it is the main character of the imaginary that the reader meets here, the (pre-oedipal, 'phallic') mother. The attention paid to her hand may also suggest that the figure of the Queen may also represent the Writer: she is the origin of the story, she loves Orlando, and decides in questions of life and death by a movement of her fingers.[49] This is the reason why the Queen cannot be caught sight of, why she cannot be touched and why all the vehicles of rhetorics are there: her immediate presence would stop words and signification, her sight would freeze the narrative.

The discourse of the body has another feature that may be relevant in this context. According to French feminist thinkers, the body (and its drives) can be a place of resistance to the symbolic order. It may resist the 'proper' places and meanings prescribed for it, it differs from them, always threatens with transgression, and keeps producing a surplus of (semiotic) meaning that cannot be integrated into the symbolic. As Brooks argues, the body "often presents us with a fall from language, a return to an infantile pre-symbolic space in which primal drives reassert their force. Yet the earliest infantile experiences . . . may be foundational of all symbolism."[50]

This is where the body as the place of transgressing the symbolic meets the body as the foundation of symbolism. In the child's world the main analogy for the understanding of experience is the body. That is the reason why the language of returning to the pre-oedipal world of the girl child can also be described as the language of the body. Therefore this textual strategy cannot only be regarded as a return to the early stages of the psyche, but also to one of the early stages of language. Language was partly built of the body, when it was built on it to hide it. And as the mother is ever present behind language, as source, inspiration and something to conceal, so is the body:

49. I am grateful to the editors of *The AnaChronisT* for pointing this out for me.

50. Brooks, p. 7. It may be worth noting apropos of this quotation that metaphorisation's being based on bodily phenomena does not mean biological determinism: a given bodily phenomenon may be used for different metaphors of different meanings. Therefore, at this point Brooks seems to be compatible with French feminism and my own argument about the role of the body in the novel.

> the body furnishes the building blocks of symbolisation, and eventually of language itself, which then takes us away from the body, but always in a tension that reminds us that mind and language need to recover the body as an otherness that is somehow primary to their very definition. . . . the body as at once a cultural construct and its other, something outside of language that language struggles to mark and to be embodied in.[51]

As the Woolf-passage quoted above may indicate, the basic trope of the discourse of the body is metonymy. Of the two basic psychical mechanisms of the unconscious in Freudian psychoanalysis – condensation and displacement – it can be connected to the latter, which Lacan explicitly connects to the way desire works.[52] The main idea of displacement – like that of a metonymy – is to transfer a thing's meaning to another thing in close connection with it, and to conceal the first thing/signifier by this. It is also important, that there is no hierarchical relation between the two things; the old and the new signifiers (unlike in the case of a metaphor or condensation), are both on the same level. "Little Hans" in Freud's famous case-study uses a metonymy when he transfers his hatred and fear of his father – which he feels in the street when walking with him – to the horses he sees there in almost the same way as Woolf does when talking about Orlando's stockings instead of talking about his/her body. In the first case it is rather fear or anxiety that drives or moves forward the signifying chain, while in the second it is desire.

If a piece of text is metonymic, one of the first things that may draw one's attention to this fact is the lack of hierarchical relations. The individual episodes cannot be connected to anything common floating somewhere above them as an omniscient perspective, it is not inner affinity that connects them, but rather their succession in time, or the presence of the main character('s body). These texts do not have any parts standing above or structuring the others, like the last two lines of the Shakespearean sonnet or the final outcome of the *Bildungsroman*. Of course, this brings about the freedom and playfulness of meanings, since the individual episodes may live their own lives without being limited by anything external to them. In the metonymic text meaning is less centred, more fluid, constantly on the move. *Orlando* does not take even its own figures of speech seriously; it often forgets them and starts creating new ones which do not necessarily converge with the previous ones. The situation is very similar in the case of the character of the protagonist. Metonymic texts are anti-essentialist; they deny all forms and notions of essence behind the surface that could limit the free play of meanings coming from the body, and as such they also subvert the idea of any coherent self. In one of the *par excel-*

51. Brooks, pp. xii–xiii.
52. Lacan, *Écrits* p. 176.

lence metonymic genres – that is, the already mentioned picaresque – one cannot find characters with psychological "depth." Voltaire's Candide or Sade's Justine are not "deeply" characterised protagonists. Orlando is their true companion in this respect. These characters seem to lack what is so central in European thinking, the Cartesian core of the personality that would hold them together, make them self-identical, and would keep them from changing in space and time, under different circumstances. These typical, metonymically structured anti-heroes may represent the repressed *other* side of our traditional (metaphysical, phallogocentric) view of the self.

The influence of history and external circumstances on Orlando's personality are often mentioned and demonstrated in the novel. Orlando changes together with the world; his/her nature, temperament and behaviour are determined by these "external" conditions, for example by his/her clothes. The novel talks about Orlando's variety of selves over many pages. The only problem (Orlando's only problem) is that (s)he cannot find a central (Cartesian) self that would unite or organise the others:

> So Orlando, at the turn by the barn, called 'Orlando?' with a note of interrogation in her voice and waited. Orlando did not come.
>
> 'All right then,' Orlando said, with the good humour people practice on these occasions; and tried another. For she had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand. Choosing then only those selves we have found room for, Orlando may now have called on the boy who cut the nigger's head down; the boy who strung it up again; the boy who sat on the hill; the boy who saw the poet; the boy who handed the Queen the bowl of rose water. . .
>
> Perhaps; but what appeared certain (for now we are in the region of 'perhaps' and 'appears') was that the one that she needed most kept aloof, for she was, to hear her talk, changing her selves as quickly as she drove – there was a new one at every corner – as happens when, for some unaccountable reason, the conscious self, which is the uppermost, and has the power to desire, wishes to be nothing but one self. This is what some people call the true self, and it is, they say, compact of all the selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain self, the Key self, which amalgamates and controls them all. Orlando was certainly seeking this self. . .[53]

53. Woolf, pp. 213–214.

Thus, Orlando's identity is an open one, it is formed by accidental circumstances, and there is no "Captain-self" that would control the others. One gets to know most about Orlando from the style and the metonymies of the text: from the image of the castle that (s)he lives in, that of the oak tree that (s)he likes lying under, and the poem *The Oak Tree* that (s)he has written and always keeps by. In this respect (s)he resembles the novel too: in its metonymic slidings and displacements the basic constituents of 'proper' symbolic systems (such as the binary oppositions of essence and appearance, male and female, or internal and external) are dislocated. In *Orlando* the "*one* of form, of the individual, of the (male) sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning" that Irigaray lists in *This Sex* as the characteristics of patriarchal phallomorphism[54] are all missing. The difference between appearance and essence collapses, and the subject is always only what we can see at the moment, in that particular situation. The subject is neither a master of being, nor that of the world: (s)he is inseparable from it, has no existence without it.

Conclusions

In his already quoted essay "Structure, Sign and Play" Derrida names two (more or less) psychoanalytical terms, joy and anxiety, as the main modes of the subject's possible relation to structurality.[55] He argues that "anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, being caught by the game,"[56] and the reason why philosophy favours fundamental grounds and centred structures is that through these anxiety can be mastered.[57] This is a point that Freud, who connected civilisation with a necessary amount of repression, discontent, and anxiety, would definitely agree with. Nevertheless, anxiety is not the only possible way of relating to structure, meaning, civilisation, or the symbolic. Following Nietzsche, Derrida argues that joy and play are also crucial, because (while anxiety and centring lead to a closure of meaning) these are the drives of the production of the new.[58] Towards the end of his essay Derrida distinguishes between "two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play,"[59] one driven more by anxiety, the other driven more by a joyful free play of the signifier.

In my opinion, Derrida makes a point that is most relevant for psychoanalysis, literature, and feminism: his model may also indicate that different texts can relate

54. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 26.
55. Derrida, pp. 279–280.
56. Derrida, p. 279.
57. Derrida, p. 279.
58. Derrida, p. 292.
59. Derrida, p. 292.

to the paternal function in different ways, some through more anxiety (that is, more submission to the Law of repression and sublimation), some through more joy and play (less submission to the Law). In more Freudian terms this would mean that some texts are more inspired by the Superego, some more by the Unconscious. If one compares the description of the Unconscious in Freud with what has been established about *Orlando*, this analogy definitely seems to stand: the lack of logical contradiction, the lack of 'normal' time, the primacy of the Pleasure Principle all seem to fit the novel well. These theoretical considerations seem to be in accord with the theories of Kristeva and (more importantly) of Irigaray, who are looking for ways of conceptualising textual and symbolic economies that are less strictly phallogocentric. Irigaray's concepts of feminine writing and *parler-entre-elles* seem to be particularly useful metaphors for understanding how such a 'female' symbolic economy is possible in *Orlando*, where it is also connected to a privileging of metonymy over metaphor, desire and joy over anxiety, and the discourse of the eroticised body over the disembodied (Cartesian) mind.

Péter Gaál-Szabó

"They got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves"

Female Places and Masculine Spaces in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Jonah's Gourd Vine*[1]

While Hurston scholarship often positions her female characters in a panoptic space of masculine subordination, Hurston reveals another, genuinely feminine aspect of their lives. The aim of the present study is to investigate on the basis of two of her novels, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, how Hurston's female subjects are able to establish their individual places and to contribute to forming a communal space of women. I argue that Hurston's female subjects do retain subjectivity also through place-construction in two ways: (a) by reinscribing space, whereby they use places of masculine social space to invert them into their own meaningful places; (b) by establishing what Teresa De Lauretis calls "space off." In this fashion, Hurston's women hybridize space, also creating a framework where a genuine female communal space can evolve.

Zora Neale Hurston's manifold cultural spaces envision female place-construction in various, often panoptic contexts, and thereby genuine feminine spatiality for her females. Thus, even though in her novels, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, Hurston acknowledges masculine transparent social space that denotes the superimposed position of the masculine, she moves beyond the simple binary of masculine and feminine and establishes female subjectivity and feminine sense of place apart from (or notwithstanding) masculine social space, yet within it. Hurston envisions places constructed by women – that is, place constituting identity, not producing it – and a space in which women negotiate identities for themselves through subjective praxis.[2] These places represent thirding in Edward W.

1. This paper represents part of a larger research, some findings of which were published in Hungarian in "Női helyek – férfi terek Zora Neale Hurston *Their Eyes Were Watching God* című regényében," in *A Nő Mint Szubjektum, a Női Szubjektum*, ed. Nóra Séllei (Debrecen: Kossuth, 2007), 141–57; it forms, in a finalized form, a chapter of my PhD dissertation, defended at the University of Debrecen in 2009.

2. Much as space and place may appear interchangeable even in the scholarly literature, they represent different entities. In the present paper I take space as an abstract entity, which

Soja's[3] and Homi Bhabha's[4] sense, that is, spatial tactics of "disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution"[5] rendering them "an ambivalent process."[6] They function thus as individual centers of meaning enframed by the masculine social space; that is, apart from it, opposing it, yet depending on it for identity.

As a result, we can count on the presence, even if only through its lack, of the masculine in Hurston's feminine spaces as well, which produces not only opposition, but also cohesive interrelation. So even though Hurston's strategy is to envision feminine private places constructed by women, in which women negotiate identities for themselves through, for instance, ritual praxis, Hurston's feminine "spaces-off" are ambivalent in nature. Teresa De Lauretis's term refers to "the elsewhere [i.e.,] those other spaces both discursive and social that exist . . . in the margins."[7] In this way, space-off means ultimately place elsewhere, not in the centre, but constructed in opposition to the hegemonic spatial discourse. Space-off suggests relationality; furthermore, it also devises spatial tactics that are characteristic of the masculine hegemonic discourse. For instance, female social space renders male presence limited, as becomes conspicuous when Lucy dies in *Jonah's*. In this scene John is excluded from the death ritual and is clearly marginalized. Thus De Lauretis's claim of "movement in and out of gender"[8] cannot mean the abolition of gender in the space-off, as masculine transparent space and feminine spaces "coexist concurrently and in contradiction,"[9] and gender has as much sense in the latter as in the former. Rather, we witness the inversion of gender in these other spaces juxtaposed to (even if within) transparent space. Only in this (pluralizing) way can De Lauretis's assertion of "multiplicity" and "heteronomy" be regarded as applicable.

In addition, the concept of space-off suggests that feminine spaces and places, and thus feminine subjectivity, are not merely socio-ideological constructs. And this is true for Hurston's fiction too. Even if it is not indicated directly in the texts, her female characters perform their subjectivities, as well as enacting them in their bodies, and inscribing and reinscribing space socially and individually, proving that

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provides the texture of places, while place's spatiality can generate its own discourse, which ultimately can be described as space.

3. See Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden: Blackwell, 1996).

4. See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

5. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 61.

6. Bhabha, *Location*, p. 37.

7. Teresa De Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender," in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1987), 1–30, p. 26.

8. De Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender," p. 26.

9. De Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender," p. 26.

the subject is always already present as a "holistic, irreducible unit"[10] despite a panoptic context. In fact, the subject cannot *not* be and, therefore it is able to resist contextualization, that is, totalization. As Raoul Eshelman points out, elaborating on the novel move of generative anthropology that he calls "performatism": "Subjectivity and semiosis are no longer treated as context-dependent, continually failing gestures but rather form closed, performatively realized wholes that resist dispersal in surrounding contexts."[11] Hurston's feminine subjects go through a process leading from a position with gendered identities through a "vertiginous progression toward deconstruction of identity" and "molecularization of the self"[12] to nomadism.[13] This process differs from Rosi Braidotti's proposition in that for Hurston's women "territories are not be crossed in the nomad's never-ending journey"[14] in order to secure boundary transgression for its own sake, but through a journey to (re)connect to place and self. In this way, nomadism marks for Hurston's women the ability to transgress and use space; and the resistance of contextualization means for her female characters that they are able both to connect to masculine social space (which, at most, can mean partial contextualization) and to establish their own places through "the ability to manipulate time, space, and causality for their own benefit."[15] For Hurston, stability of the minimal self[16] through connectedness to place is an imperative, and the creative, existential use of space is a must.

Accordingly, Hurston's female places evolve in private or public masculine places in the first place, as they are tightly connected to the positioning of the female body. There are three kinds of female places detectable in the works under

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10. Raoul Eshelman, "Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism," *Anthropoetics* 6.2 (2000/2001), 30 June 2005 <http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0602/perform.htm>.

11. Eshelman, "Postmodernism."

12. Raoul Eshelman, "Performatism in Architecture: On Framing and the Spatial Realization of Ostensivity," *Anthropoetics* 7.2 (2001/2) 30 June 2005 <http://www.anthropoetics .ucla.edu/ap0702/arch2.htm>.

13. In her *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), Rosi Braidotti refers to nomadism as "a creative sort of becoming . . . a perfomative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction experience and knowledge" (p. 27), thereby identifying a hybrid subject that "resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior" (p. 26).

14. Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, p. 17.

15. Eshelman, "Postmodernism."

16. Hurston's idea of a minimal self is in contrast to Christopher Lasch's concept, who, in a Freudean manner, conceptualizes the minimal self as an ambivalent entity in the function of a "tension between the desire for union and the fact of separation" (Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times* [New York: Norton, 1984], p. 177). For Hurston it signifies stability supported by spatial embeddedness.

discussion, which also function as signifiers of these women's stage of development and the degree of maturation of their subjectivity: domestic space, the (back) yard, and places outside the former, for example, outside built environment. These are physical, geographic locales, where, apart from their bodies as minimal places, Hurston's women can identify with the environment freely.

Even if the particular female character lives on her own as Nanny in *Their Eyes* does, her place is situated in and surrounded by transparent space. The constraint of race complements the first stage of Janie's life as she and Nanny lived "in de white folks' back yard."[17] Her sense of place is determined to an extent by Washburn's place so that, as Janie reports, "Ah didn't know Ah wuzn't white till Ah was round six years old."[18] Her reduced self is also shown by the fact that at the Washburns's she does not even have a name; she is called "Alphabet" for her many names. Furthermore, stigmatized by the place, she is excluded from the ring games by the other, black children.[19]

I have discussed the scene of the "blossoming pear tree in the back yard"[20] elsewhere (see "Ambivalence"[21]), which reveals Janie's genuine sense of place, characterizing her feminine place-construction. This all-important, yet ambivalent scene marks not only her sexual awakening and the advent of her maturing subjectivity, but also her socialization into gender. In fact, the visionary pear tree in bloom engenders for Janie a specific and subjective sense of place, and its subsequent absence conditions her behavior powerfully:

> She was sixteen. She had glossy leaves and bursting buds and she wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to elude her. Nothing on the place nor in her grandma's house answered her. She searched as much of the world as she could from the top of the front steps and then went on down to the front gate and leaned over to gaze up and down the road. Looking, waiting, breathing short with impatience. Waiting for the world to be made.[22]

The vivid description shows Janie's maturation and, spatially, her effort to make use of Nanny's house, that is, to enliven it, as well as Janie's final disenchantment with Nanny's house. Hurston's description is existentially even more relevant as Janie's alienation is heightened by Nanny's penetrating antagonism: "Her [Nan-

17. Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Harper, 1990), p. 9.
18. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 8.
19. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 8.
20. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 10.
21. Peter Gaál-Szabó, "The Ambivalence of Zora Neale Hurston's Imaginative Space," *British and American Studies* (2004) 187–197.
22. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 11.

ny's] eyes didn't bore and pierce. They diffused and melted Janie, the room and the world into one comprehension."[23] The palpable coinage demonstrates the extreme mechanism of power, as also manifested in the trope of the pear tree, as not only is Janie's body marginalized and positioned unwillingly in space, but the contours of her body, those of the minimal self, are attacked. Her newly emerging sense of place, denoting her subjectivity symbolized by the blossoming pear tree, is endangered.

The other striking aspect of Janie attempting to enliven Nanny's place is how her habitus urges her to construct her own place, but it also characterizes the nature of her sense of place, which is tied to an immaterial, visionary place. Pierre Bourdieu conceptualizes habitus as a "strategy-generating principle"[24] and as "universalizing mediation,"[25] which "reproduce[s] regularities [as] history turned into nature."[26] Thus habitus is rooted in past experiences and recurs as a horizon of expectations in present situations. Searching the world from the top of the steps means searching out the horizon, but not so much the geographic environment as the regions of her mind. Such confabulation – "wherein the remembering subject intercalates fictitious elements or events into memory without awareness of the intercalation"[27] – is activated by her habitus. It is enabled by "the demands of the current situation and past activity,"[28] and, through the mediation of confabulation, "habitus generates action."[29] Janie's daydreaming, engendering what Foucault calls "countermemory,"[30] is an ultimate characteristic of Hurston's women.

The tree metaphor plays a significant role at Killicks's place, accompanying Janie all her life. Similarly to Lucy in *Jonah's*, Janie is urged to identify with the gender roles by "Nanny and the old folks"[31] and tries to render Killicks's house motivated for herself. In this way, the collective attempt at socializing her into gender seems successful as she initially accepts the spatial gender divides within the home; she even inscribes gendered space when she insists on her own domestic territories such as the kitchen.[32] This notion proves her need of place-construction and sense

23. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 12.

24. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 1977), p. 72.

25. Bourdieu, p. 79.

26. Bourdieu, p. 78.

27. Edward S. Casey, "Stompin' on Scott: A Cursory Critique of Mind and Memory," *Research in Phenomenology* 30.1 (2000) 223–239, p. 230.

28. Theodore R. Schatzki, "Subject, Body, Place," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91.4 (2001) 698–702, p. 698.

29. Schatzki, p. 698.

30. Braidotti, p. 25.

31. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 20.

32. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 30.

of place, and also the crack in hegemonic spatial tactics that enables Janie to use even gendered space creatively and for her own goals.

Besides domestic places, the yard takes a central position in the spatial discourse. Moving to the yard to work under a "fine oak tree"[33] is her first attempt to break away from gendered environment. There she is able to enact her vision of the pear tree authentically. The recuperation to the vision prompted by the trope of the tree pinpoints Janie's nomadic character as this scene marks, for the first time, nomadic cohesion in Braidotti's sense: it is "engendered by repetitions, cyclical moves, [and] rhythmical displacement."[34] The oak tree can be identified as the first cyclical move in Janie's journey. Not only does the firm stature of the oak tree, releasing associations with an ancient setting, suggest so, but, and especially in contrast to the desolate atmosphere of Killicks's house, so does the sensuous description of the moment, reminiscent of her vision. It is springtime – the time of blossoms – and "the noon filtered through the leaves of the fine oak tree where she sat and made lacy patterns on the ground."[35] In this condensed scene the lacy patterns reveal what is really going on in her. If the scene is compared to how Lucy prepares and decorates her wedding bed with "homemade lace,"[36] a common pattern emerges. She is waiting for the visionary to happen as she did previously under the pear tree, when she heard whistling and her future husband appeared.

Jonah's presents the relevant female characters, Amy and Lucy, captives of domestic places. In Amy's case nature enforces limitation even more strongly. It does not present her unconfined with opportunities and the possibility of freedom in Alabama, as Amy lives on the wrong side of "de Big Creek"[37] among sharecroppers. Here social and economic opportunities are strongly curtailed by the geographic location and limitations of nature – its barrenness signifying her own. Her forlornness explains why she felt free only "for a minute" and had to return to the house, where she could experience relative autonomy in gendered space – a seeming contradiction.

It is indeed in the domestic sphere that both Amy and Lucy can establish their own places, even if these powerfully intermingle with masculine transparency, and can only obtain a degree of "*transcendent functionalism*"[38] characteristic of subjective places. Feminine places in *Jonah's* owe their nature to the juxtaposition of the two spaces, while the culturally dominant masculine is superimposed over the fem-

33. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 26.
34. Braidotti, p. 22.
35. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 26.
36. Zora Neale Hurston, *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (New York: Harper, 1990), p. 81.
37. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 14.
38. Eshelman, "Architecture."

inine. The two coexist, nevertheless, and feminine private places do retain a definite degree of subjectivity. Amy is, for instance, able to construct her own place in the home with the help of her children by relying on "spatially mediated, minimal relations"[39] that form a distinctive family space in opposition to her husband Ned.

Lucy, similarly to Janie, can initially discover only an immaterial world for herself at her parents' place because her class-conscious mother, ideologizing gender relations, seeks to exert total control over her. Emmeline represents the same African American middle-class code that Joe Starks does in Eatonville. By insisting on "proper" gender relations and by policing Lucy closely when John courts her, Emmeline seeks to instill the gender consciousness of her class into Lucy, but without success. Even though, unlike Janie's explicitly illuminated vision of the pear tree, Lucy experiences the same revelation – and thus new horizons and a sense of place – in a moment John squeezes her arm and "in a flash she discovered for herself old truths."[40] These prelapsarian truths are, of course, contrary to Emmeline's gender code of masculine space, and their recognition by Lucy indicates the advent of a definite subjectivity for her. As is reported of her the next morning after the encounter with John: "Lucy found a hair upon her body and exulted."[41] This echoes Janie's resolution after her vision of the pear tree: "So this was a marriage!"[42] Lucy's response is identical: "Ahm a woman now."[43] Her revelation may seem childish at first, but it becomes especially significant in a closely policed environment. Not only does this scene signify sexual awakening for Lucy and her declaration an act of subjectivity, but this "step away from childhood"[44] also loosens her ties to her mother and detaches Lucy from the parental place. In the self-conscious reassertion of her emerging womanhood, opposition to the gender conceptions of the black middle-class, mimicking white middle-class ideological notions concerning gender, is shaping up. By voicing who she is, Lucy designates a place of her own, in this case her body as minimal place, juxtaposing her world and the *other* in a pluralist, or rather, coercive fashion – as Janie does several times in *Their Eyes*.

"Unsilencing"[45] becomes conspicuous when Lucy talks back to her mother on the day of her wedding, evoking the feminine tree metaphor employed in Hurston's

39. Eshelman, "Architecture."
40. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 68.
41. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 68.
42. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 11.
43. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 68.
44. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 69.
45. Rachel Blau DuPlessis employs the term in her "Power, Judgement, and Narrative in a Work of Zora Neale Hurston: Feminist Cultural Studies" (*New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God*, ed. Michael Awkward [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990], 95–125) to refer to

works: "Ahm telling anybody, ole uh young, grizzly or gray, Ah ain't takin' no whipping tuhnight. All mah switches done growed to trees."[46] bell hooks powerfully paraphrases struggle in her *Talking Back*:

> Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and growth possible. It is that act of speech of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice.[47]

It must be noted, however, that unsilencing is not merely a language-specific action as hooks suggests,[48] but a performative action in the line of De Lauretis's movement to space-off, whereby the pantheon of cultural performance is applied. Indeed, if the struggle of Hurston and her female characters is "the search for self and community,"[49] unsilencing is a cultural act of reimmersion.

In her marriage Lucy's place-construction remains ambiguous. Her life is extremely limited spatially, and she is defenseless against her husband's promiscuous and sometimes brutal behavior; she cannot evade socialization into gender despite her earlier promising vision. Similarly, however, to characters in performatist fiction, who often "find themselves encased in a frame or rigid set of circumstances that they transcend by reverting to reduced states of consciousness and/or by focusing on simple, opaque things,"[50] Lucy manages to redeem her inner self, too. Thus she has to make do with what she has: her feminine private place derives from the identification with the walnut bed, the symbol of marriage. The bed shapes the outer contours of her extended self and so "She made it a spread and bolster of homemade lace."[51] Especially in opposition to the following paragraph, which describes John's permissive concept of marriage in violent contrast to Lucy's, this sentence shows not only her attention to detail and the effort she puts into shaping her home, but also her hopes penetrating her sense of place

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Janie's narrative strategy of "narrating her own silences" (p. 88) – performative action regarding her emerging new subjectivity just as her "thinking silence" or political action just as her "protesting silence" was beforehand.

46. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 78.

47. bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End,1989), p. 9.

48. hooks, p. 28.

49. Michael Awkward, *Inspiring Influences* (New York: Columbia UP, 1989), p. 5.

50. Eshelman, "Architecture."

51. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 81.

that she realizes spatially. The bed also represents "paradoxical space"[52] – to use Gillian Rose's term – because of its overlapping functions that "complement and contest each other":[53] it both fulfills a regulatory role for Lucy as it appears as the prime means of conditioning her life and grants her space where she can enjoy relative autonomy for a while in Alabama. No wonder that Hurston uses it as the main trope to illuminate Lucy's utmost deprivation: when she is pregnant and conscious of John's unfaithfulness, Bud, her brother, comes to collect her debt in her poverty, and it is the bed he takes away. Only the feather mattress remains, a vague and tormented reminder of her most intimate autonomy: "Lucy was shivering and weeping upon the feather mattress."[54]

Even though Eatonville does not change Lucy's basic position as she remains characteristically in the domestic sphere, where she cannot construct a place for herself solely, on her own, because of John's regulating presence wedging into it, Lucy's role changes dramatically. Spatially this is shown by the bed itself, which this time she earns by sewing for a white woman.[55] However, she defines herself clearly with respect to and in the function of her husband already before Eatonville: "Ah wants mah husband tuh be uh great big man. . . Ah wants tuh uphold yuh in eve'ything."[56] But in Eatonville she takes a more active role in determining family matters; moreover, she decides about her husband's career plans. As an *éminence grise*, she conditions her husband (against his will: "Dat's uh bigger job Ah wants tuh tackle, Lucy. You so big-eyed"[57]) to buy a five-acre plot and to take on better jobs such as carpentry and later preaching, and, as he increasingly accepts Lucy's work ethic and "maneuvering,"[58] he even becomes the mayor in Eatonville as well as moderator in the state. Her will-to-power is also well perceived by the Eatonville community: in a porch talk, for instance, Walter Thomas exclaims: "Aw, 'tain't you, Pearson. . . iss dat li'l' handful uh woman you got on de place";[59] and Sam Mosely adds: "Anybody could put hisself on de ladder wid her in de house";[60] and later on he is called "Uh wife-made man."[61] Lucy's

52. Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 150.

53. Rose, p. 160.

54. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 91.

55. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 130.

56. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 96.

57. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 109.

58. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 116.

59. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 109.

60. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 110.

61. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 113.

prestige and her leading role from the background become even more palpable in the aftermath of the campaign for mayorship when Lucy's role in winning the campaign is repeatedly emphasized.

Lucy's acceptance by the community, unlike Janie's in Eatonville after her rebirth, derives from both Lucy's acceptance of the possible horizon granted to her by masculine space and the consequent construction of "personal networks" (however, not necessarily with other women) that prove both "enabling and constraining."[62] Even if it is her task to push and shove John ahead,[63] she never exceeds the space ascribed to her, that is, domestic space with the role of a mother, and social space with satellite roles beside her husband, tied to his identity. Lucy's female places thus remain limited despite the upward movement she makes socially and her firmer and widened existential anchorage. Her confinement is rendered conspicuous many times in the work, but, perhaps, most vividly by her high degree of immobility. When Lucy and John converse, it happens in their home, where John receives instructions, but when Lucy is in need, she is left alone in the home and her habitus does not allow her to flee to another place, for example nature, as John or Janie do in *Their Eyes*. As she cannot hope for help in the physical, social world, her world can only develop inwardly, but there "only the coldness grew numerous."[64] In fact, the only time she oversteps her boundaries is when, sick as she is, she talks back to John: "Ah ain't going' tuh hush nothin' uh de kind. . . Me and mah chillun got some rights."[65] Her reassertion of the self shows her self-awareness and also the power she gains from family space, as well as her position in transparent social space, but she clearly overrates it – which is also indicated spatially initially as John is towering over her and she is lying in the bed below him: she is stopped abruptly by John hitting her. John's act shatters her world so badly so that Lucy begins preparing to die, which is indicated by her giving her only property, the bed, to Isis. She never leaves the bed again; the room remains frozen in that scene, the countdown implied by the descending movement of a spider on the ceiling.

Besides the tree metaphor, the trope of the road signifies for Hurston the possibility of self-fulfillment. The nonplace-like road possesses a dual function for Hurtson's women, representing also the horizon for them. Several times Janie contemplates roads – e.g., at Nanny's and then at Killicks's place. But even beyond engendering expectations for her, roads symbolize a space-off for her outside built environment. Female private places (that is, back yards and natural

62. Melissa Gilbert, " 'Race,' Space, and Power: The Survival Strategies of Working Poor Women," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88.4 (1998) 595–621, p. 616.

63. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 116.

64. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 115.

65. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 128.

environments) share a common aspect, which is their detachedness from transparent built environment.

Furthermore, the open space of roads also symbolizes a qualitative difference in these women's strategy of (also culturally bound) opposition. Namely, by escaping to roads, while moving away from built environment, the female subject (a) sets up a nature-culture binary (culture meaning masculine social space); and (b) abandons the social in favor of the individual. In fact, as Janie's movement becomes analogous to the dancing body, "presentic movement [of which] interrupts the historical time-frame and creates a space of 'wide-openness' – an unlimited and undetermined time-space of unforeseen possibilities."[66] Roads are liminal places and embody a space of action, where Hurston's female subject is free to establish herself.

It must be acknowledged, however, that Janie's habitus based on her vision conditions her sense of place at these open places. Both times she sets out on roads she does so for men, Starks and Tea Cake; that is, Hurston determines the subjectivity of her female characters closely in relation to men. Nevertheless, Janie's liberation is explicit when she breaks away from Killicks:

> The morning road air was like a new dress. That made her feel the apron tied around her waist. She untied it and flung it on a bush beside the road and walked on, picking flowers and making a bouquet. . . From now on until death she was going to have flower dust and springtime sprinkled over everything. A bee for her bloom. Her old thoughts were going to come handy now, but new worlds would have to be made and said to fit them.[67]

The wonderful contrast between the refreshing dawn and the apron, a symbol of masculine socialization of women into domestic space, makes palpable Janie's new consciousness, as she temporarily obtains "masculinist hypermobilty."[68] Also the high degree of her sense of liberation emerges clearly in the act of getting rid of the apron and collecting flowers in a free and childlike manner. Her spontaneous behavior and "nondirected and nonlimited movement"[69] can be compared to the naturalness of improvisational dance, in which, as Elaine Clark-Rapley evaluates it, the "dancing body moves within space, inhabits space," whereby "the body

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66. Elaine Clark-Rapley, "Dancing Bodies: Moving beyond Marxian Views of Human Activity, Relations and Consciousness," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 29.2 (1999) 89–108, p. 104.

67. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 31.

68. Geraldine Pratt and Brenda Yeoh, "Transnational (Counter) Topographies," *Gender, Place and Culture* 10.2 (2003) 159–166, p. 160.

69. Clark-Rapley, p. 104.

is the apex or point of reference."[70] Her sense of place inhabits space for a short time through her reaching back and recuperating her vision. The "nostalgia for fixity"[71] apparently counters Braidotti's concept of the nomad; however, it is this vision that urges Janie to undertake the quest for self in a "[mode] of definite, seasonal patterns of movement through rather fixed routes"[72] that yet reasserts nomadism in this context too. Fixed routes bear special importance also in this scene from the point of view of Hurston's geopolitics. When it is narrated that "Janie hurried out of the front gate and turned south,"[73] not only is the direction of Janie's pilgrimage indicated, but also, by way of contrast, the region where African Americans can attain what Janie experiences in the following moments.

Especially in the context of Janie's cyclical patterns of movement, also paralleling blues methodology,[74] roads for Hurston thus become indeed a metaphor of a particular nomadism in the search of self and place embedded in a region of cultural space. The transformation of roads renders this connection palpable: they carry Janie south and disembogue into a landscape, where there is "Wild cane on either side of the road hiding the rest of the world [and] People [are] wild too."[75] Whereas roads north from the Everglades are framed by houses, modernism, and, in general, masculine transparent space, here the boundaries between nature and culture are deconstructed, as Ann R. Morris and Margaret M. Dunn point out about contemporary Florida, "[t]he migrant workers on the muck govern their lives by the crops; the Seminoles in the glades watch the earth for signs."[76] The symbiosis is also depicted by the roads as they become akin in their nature to the surrounding landscape: "Dirt roads so rich and black that a half mile of it would have fertilized a Kansas wheat field."[77]

For Janie, Eatonville grants similar aspects of social upward mobility to Lucy's. She becomes the "bell cow" for the community, but ultimately it means incarceration into overmythicized middle-class femininity with all its ambiguities in an African American community in the Deep South, and physical and social limitation. In

70. Clark-Rapley, p. 103.

71. Braidotti, p. 22.

72. Braidotti, p. 22.

73. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 31.

74. See Maria V. Johnson, " 'The World in a Jug and the Stopper in (Her) Hand': *Their Eyes* As Blues Performance," *African American Review* (1998). Bnet. 19 Sept. 2004 <http://www.findarticles.com>.

75. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 123.

76. Ann R. Morris and Margaret M. Dunn, "Flora and Fauna in Hurston's Florida Novels," in *Zora in Florida*, ed. Steve Glassman and Kathryn Lee Seidel (Orlando: University of Central Florida Press, 1991), 1–12, p. 5.

77. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 123.

the first place, however, her status as a satellite of Starks's marks the confutation of her subjectivity envisioned in the tree trope. Starks's "homo economicus" nature disenchants Janie's resurfacing dreamwork revealed in the ecstatic moments under the oak tree in Killicks's yard and on the road just before. Shortly after their arrival in Eatonville her spatial practice, in the manner of Michel De Ceratau's walking-like reinscription of space,[78] is shattered as "the new lumber was rattling off the wagon and being piled under the big live oak tree."[79] It is surely not by chance that the timber is hauled exactly under a tree characterized in this way. The "live oak tree" stands for Janie and her sense of place as a direct continuation of both earlier visions under trees; the reference to its size embodies the amplitude of her expectations, which are reborn and, at the same time, threatened by desacralizing industrialization. Moreover, the rattling sound contrasts sharply with both the alto chant of bees and the homely atmosphere under the tree in Killicks's yard.

The threat of annihilation to the tree engendering Janie's subjectivity is overridden when "Jodie moved his things and moved downstairs."[80] After this Janie is beginning to really reinscribe space (also via body politics right after his death, as she reclaims her body with her "exhibitive and performative" hairstyle[81]). After Janie's long-term subversion, spatial inversion shows that Starks's is losing its power over Janie, while Janie is getting hold of the heart of the house: the private spheres. The meaning of the house changes ultimately with Starks's death, and, as also Gaston Bachelard explains the nature of houses, the house grows to symbolize the self as it is turned into "*felicitous space*."[82] This can first be detected when Janie is afraid to go home alone at night: "it was no place to show her fear there in the darkness between the house and the store."[83] An "architectonic closure" takes place in the narrative as the house comes to signify security; it has become a private place for her, and the embodiment of her extended self, or as Bachelard puts it, the "topography of [her] intimate being."[84] It becomes the symbol of the pear tree in blossom that is waiting for a bee to sink into the sanctuary of her bloom.

The progress of Tea Cake in winning Janie's heart is paralleled clearly with Tea Cake's advancing toward the house and entering it. First he appears in the store; the

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78. See Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

79. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 38.

80. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 77.

81. Evelyn Newman Phillips, " 'Doing More than Heads': African American Women Healing, Resisting, and Uplifting Others in St. Petersburg, Florida," *Frontiers* 22.2 (2001) 25–42, p. 38.

82. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), p. xxxi.

83. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 94.

84. Bachelard, p. xxxiii.

next time they meet, he accompanies Janie to the house onto the porch, which, by then, signifies the outer layers of her social, public self, or, as Clare Cooper puts it, the "public exterior";[85] the same evening he is allowed closer when they do the washing up together in the kitchen[86] – the latter representing in many cultures "both a sacred and functional space"[87] a transitional space outside the private. The third time he enters the "intimate interior"[88] by walking into the living room without asking to play the piano. This time he ends up playing with Janie's hair as if with the strings of a musical instrument.[89] It is there he confesses his love for her while Janie is standing at the newel post, blocking the way leading up to her bedroom. The fourth time Tea Cake visits Janie "they went inside and their laughter rang out first from the kitchen and all over the house."[90] The fact that their laughter fills the entire house indicates that Janie's vision of the tree and a bee finds physical materialization. The texture of the embodied self becomes the house at that moment. One expects what also happens: the next morning they are in bed, "Tea Cake almost kissing her breath away."[91]

The major breakthrough in Janie's development comes when in the Everglades "her soul crawled out from its hiding place."[92] From the point of view of spatial analysis, this "exteriorization of the mind"[93] signifies that Janie's metamorphosis is completed. The passage shows how Janie grows to make her last dynamic move: to identify with the nonplace-like or, from another angle, liminoid open space. The curve of her final development becomes visible in the difference between the exaltation in her bedroom with Tea Cake and this scene. It is reported that in the bedroom "after a long time of passive happiness, she got up and opened the window and let Tea Cake leap forth to the sky on a wind."[94] Here, despite her sense of happiness and liberation, Janie remains in enclosed space and built environment, which stands in sharp contrast to Florida's Southern open landscapes. She opens the window, a clear spatial indication of the dissolution of

85. Clare Cooper, *The House as a Symbol of the Self* (Berkeley: U of California, 1974), p. 131.

86. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, pp. 97–98.

87. Shampa Mazumdar and Sanjoy Mazumdar, " 'Women's Significant Spaces': Religion, Space, and Community," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 19 (1999) 159–170, p. 163.

88. Cooper, p. 131.

89. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 99.

90. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 103.

91. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 103.

92. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 122.

93. Malin Zimm, "The Dying Dreamer: Architecture of Parallel Realities," *Technoetic Arts* 1.1 (2003) 61–68, p. 67.

94. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 103.

the previous inner fortification that she had built up in an answer to Starks's harassments ("She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her. She went inside there to see what it was"[95]). Outgoing in Casey's sense represents the beginning of her subsequent transformation into Braidotti's nomadic subject as Janie is able to "free the activity of thinking from the hold of phallocentric dogmatism, returning thought to its freedom, its liveliness, its beauty,"[96] or, from another (African American) angle, the last move in completing her blues performance. Still, similarly to Lucy, for whom this is the most she can reach, Janie does not leave the bedroom (the house of her self) to meet the outside world in order to materialize her vision, uniting body and soul, in the exterior context. At this point she is only able to persist on the level of mental and spiritual endeavors metaphorized by her looking up to the sky, but remaining standing on the earth in a room. The importance of Florida for Janie lies in finding a space-off, where she manages to unite body and soul and to contextualize herself in a cultural space that does not discard her unitary originary subjectivity, but enhances it.

Her space-off is still intact when Janie reaches the final stage of her development in her marriage with Tea Cake. Todd McGowan argues that Janie can obtain momentary freedom after she kills Tea Cake,[97] but regarding even the subtlety of previous frameworks that Janie is forced into, her act of killing Tea Cake signifies rather Hurston's suture of her own disappointment with marriage into the novel, and in this way, the momentary shattering of Hurston's "metaphysical optimism."[98] I must agree with Selwyn R. Cudjoe, who claims that "a person is not complete until she locates herself fully in her time (history) and her place (geography)."[99] Janie reaches, via transpatial migration across the Southern landscape, an "amorphous" state of existence "connected to many identities,"[100] that is, not simply gendered first and foremost, but, unlike Sarah N. Gatson's identification of amorphous individuals, she reconstructs her self by finally "validating self [and] rhetorically reconstructing the past"[101] in her sovereign private place: her back yard.

95. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 67.

96. Braidotti, p. 8.

97. Todd McGowan, "Liberation and Domination: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and the Evolution of Capitalism," *MELUS* (Spring 1999), Bnet. 11 Apr. 2006 <http://www.findarticles.com>.

98. Eshelman, "Postmodernism."

99. Olga Idriss Davis, "A Black Woman as Rhetorical Critic: Validating Self and Violating the Space of Otherness," *Women's Studies in Communication* 21.1 (1998) 77–89, p. 79.

100. Sarah N. Gatson, "On Being Amorphous: Autoethnography, Genealogy, and a Multiracial Identity," *Qualitative Inquiry* 9.1 (2003) 20–48, p. 40.

101. Davis, p. 80.

While it is the shared experience in gendered space and praxis reinscribing space that connect women in Hurston's fiction too, for Janie these also represent ways to distance herself from masculine space and other women likewise. Her feminine spatiality renders her subjectivity autonomous; however, she hybridizes properties of masculine space and transposes them into the feminine, unlike other women of the Eatonville community. Clear instances of the latter are the games she plays, such as checkers and shooting, as well as the man she is associated with – all of them transgress boundaries. In fact, a "deconstructive playfulness"[102] characterizes the praxis she devises in her new spatial framework.

Tea Cake in this framework occupies a subordinate position which is also spatially expressed, even if his position can be seen as ambivalent: he never settles, so socially he is placeless and marginalized, but his freedom derives exactly from his social exclusion and his consequent physical mobility. In a systematic practice of thirding, Janie, by associating with him, transgresses, but, at the same time, transcends the boundaries of social space, especially its class and gender constraints. On Starks's side Janie acquires previously a middle-class status and later the prestigious position of a well-to-do widow, who is supposed to maintain proper gender relations, while remaining in gendered space. Tea Cake represents the negation of gender ideology by being younger and poorer, and through his praxis and gender conceptions, particularly in contrast to other males courting Janie.

By choosing Tea Cake, Janie inverts masculine space by the de-reconstruction of gender,[103] which becomes really visible in the figure of Hezekiah, who helps out in the store: Janie, the owner of the store, standing higher in the social hierarchy than the seventeen year old boy also because of her age, develops the habit of playing checkers on the porch, which previously was a tool in Starks's hand in her subordination (on one occasion Starks orders Janie, "Go fetch de checker-board *and* de checkers,"[104] meaning that Janie is not intelligent enough to play a male's game), while Hezekiah ("the best imitation of Joe" in his habits, at which "she laughed outright"[105]) remains in the store to work instead of Janie.

By letting Janie reassert her subjectivity through hybridization and through drawing a map of "counter topography"[106] in physical space, Hurston distances her character from her community via bordercrossing, and particularly from the race, gender, class ideology that penetrates the African American community. Janie in-

102. McGowan, p. 1.
103. De Lauretis, p. 24.
104. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, 71.
105. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, pp. 87, 88.
106. Pratt and Yeoh, p. 163.

verts both gender and class conventions by transgressing gender boundaries imbued with class ideology, and Hurston exerts a powerful critique of "the race" by ironically separating Janie from mainstream ideals also in space. By allowing Janie to enact her vision, Hurston subverts "controlling images"[107] of the black female, and proposes an autonomous subjectivity which is yet embedded in a sociocultural space.

Autonomous subjectivity can be detected in the fact that Janie is able to form a communal space with her friend. However, Hurston deconstructs female transparent space individually and socially already before the Everglades. Hurston's strategy is not to construct an entirely new, alternative universe, which is ultimately proved by the devastation in the Hurricane scene, but to build in fissures in masculine and female transparent spaces. In the focal point of these schisms one can detect the genuinely individual that is able to shape nurturing social relations as well.

It is Southern black cultural space, where Hurston's female characters ultimately reach the horizon of their female subjectivities and sense of place. It is not that gendered space becomes overridden, but rather that Hurston constructs a space in which gender relations are embedded in a pluralist context. On the muck in *Their Eyes* female and masculine spaces are juxtaposed in natural heterotopia and, at the same time, intertwined not to abolish gender, but to form an integrated space (from a womanist perspective) of a large variety of mosaics. Janie's overalls undergird this statement as they symbolize a "nice bit of cross-dressing, signifying equality and sexuality in gender terms. . ."[108] Thirding renders possible for Janie, for instance, what previously only men have power to do with women: in an inverted, yet parallel scene with *Jonah's*, Janie "cut him [that is, Tea Cake] short with a blow"[109] in a fit of jealousy; and after they make love, "she had to crow over the fallen Nunkie,"[110] just as John in *Jonah's* "held Lucy tightly and thought pityingly of other men."[111] This shows the neatness of the mechanism of integrating feminization, problematizing the supposed homogeneity of social space, and effecting polyvalence. For Hurston feminine space-off cuts across gender lines and class boundaries, and it is realized idealistically in the geographic region of Florida, where spacing off is not a matter of life instinct only, but a possibility of choice.

107. Rupert Simms, "Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women," *Gender and Society* 15.6 (2001) 879–897, p. 879.

108. DuPlessis, p. 25.

109. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 131.

110. Hurston, *Their Eyes*, p. 132.

111. Hurston, *Jonah's*, p. 111.

Ágnes Györke

"Who has the best tunes?"

Sounds of Englishness in *The Satanic Verses*[1]

This paper offers a reading of *The Satanic Verses* as a secular narrative: focusing on the chapters set in London, I analyse spaces of Englishness in the novel. It is my contention that "imagined communities," to use Benedict Anderson's term, are allegorized by the trope of voice in the text: national identifications are portrayed as secular miracles, collective moments of national unisonance, suggesting that the most ephemeral entity is invested with the greatest possible significance in the novel. Focusing on three episodes (Rosa Diamond's vision of William the Conqueror, Saladin's quest for Englishness on the streets of London, and the recreation of Dickens' city in the Shepperton film studios) I argue that the more disarticulate and intangible the sound effects allegorizing these moments are, the less controllable they become by pedagogical discourses, and the more they are able to survive in the postmodern text.

Who has the best tunes? The Devil, of course. That is, in Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, which is often considered to be narrated from the perspective of Satan, or Iblis, his Muslim equivalent. The allusion is, as Paul Brians notes, to John Wesley, who set his hymns to popular melodies, arguing that "the Devil shouldn't have all the best tunes."[2] It suggests that the devil's voice is tempting and seductive, which is, of course, hardly a surprising idea; the snake in The Bible, Mephistopheles in *Faust*, Lucifer in Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*, or professor Woland in *The Master and Margarita*, just to mention a few examples, are all famous for their cunning and tricky voices. The motto of Rushdie's novel, taken from Daniel Defoe's *The History of the Devil*, endows Satan with an equally seductive power by locating him in an unfixed, "liquid," ambiguous space:

> Satan, being thus confined to a vagabond, wandering, unsettled condition, is without any certain abode; for though he has, in consequence of his angelic nature, a kind of empire in the liquid waste of air, yet this is certainly

1. The work is supported by the TÁMOP 4.2.1./B-09/1/KONV-2010-0007 project. The project is implemented through the New Hungary Development Plan, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

2. Paul Brians, "Notes for Salman Rushdie: *The Satanic Verses*," *Washington State University*, 1 September 2011 <http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/anglophone/satanic_verses/1.html>.

> part of his punishment, that he is. . . without any fixed place, or space, allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon.[3]

This transitory, fluid space becomes miraculous in the novel: characters start to fly in the air, Mahound (Muhammad) receives divine revelation on top of Mount Cone (Mount Hira), Allaluia meets the ghosts of famous mountain climbers on Everest, and so on. The airspace is the realm of voices as well, as if this space itself endowed these categories with magical power: a voice commands Gibreel to fly *and sing*; Allah *speaks* to Mahound through his Archangel, Gibreel; and Allie *converses* with the ghost of Maurice Wilson on top of Mount Everest. Gibreel and Saladin's flight at the very beginning of the book already suggests that magic voices will be located in a fluid, unfixed, and intangible dimension in the novel.

It is an anonymous, divine power that commands Gibreel to sing after the explosion of their airplane:

> 'Fly,' it commanded Gibreel. 'Sing.'
>
> Chamcha held on to Gibreel while the other began, slowly at first and then with increasing rapidity and force, to flap his arms. Harder and harder he flapped, and as he flapped a song burst out of him, and like the song of the spectre of Rekha Merchant it was sung in a language he did not know to a tune he never heard. Gibreel never repudiated the miracle; unlike Chamcha, who tried to reason it out of existence, he never stopped saying that the gazal had been celestial, that without the song the flapping would have been for nothing, and without the flapping it was a sure thing that they would have hit the waves like rocks . . . . Whereas instead they began to slow down. The more emphatically Gibreel flapped and sang, sang and flapped, the more pronounced the declaration, until finally the two of them were floating down to the Channel like scraps of paper in a breeze. (9)

Gibreel's voice saves the two heroes, enabling them to land safely on British shores. The voice is the source of magic, and it becomes associated with divine power, yet the nature of this miracle remains profoundly ambiguous: the reader can never be sure whether the voice is angelic or satanic, divine or mad. The only thing we can be certain of is that this most ephemeral and intangible entity is invested with the greatest possible significance in the novel.

Apart from evoking transcendental entities, voices in *The Satanic Verses* are also related to schizophrenic delusions. The very structure of the novel suggests that

3. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Vintage, 1998).

we are dealing with a profoundly schizophrenic world: the text is literally split, since the even chapters take place in London, the metropolitan capital of the West, where the two migrants try to establish a new life, whereas the odd ones take the reader to the East, to the time of Muhammad in the seventh century, and that of Ayatollah Khomeini in the eighties. Furthermore, perhaps the entire novel can be read as the struggle of the two main characters, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha: after migrating to England, Gibreel becomes the Archangel of Allah (or, perhaps, suffers from paranoid delusions) while Saladin is transformed into the devil (or, perhaps, becomes the allegorical figure of the despised migrant). The historical chapters are dreamed by Gibreel, suggesting that history is, just as James Joyce put it, a nightmare from which we are trying to awake. Or, perhaps, if we take an even more cynical position: a paranoid, though all the more seductive, delusion.

It is my contention that voices and sound effects do not appear in the text only in the context of religion and paranoid delusions, but that they speak about different aspects of nationhood as well: whereas *voices* exemplify what Homi K. Bhabha calls pedagogical national address, the *sound* effects evoke an alternative national unisonance in the text, which is akin to his concept of the performative nation. As Bhabha puts it: the people of a nation "must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process."[4] It is this "prodigious, living principle of the people" (297) that appears in moments of national unisonance in the novel. I claim that the more intangible these moments are, the less controllable they become by pedagogical discourses, and the more they are able to survive in this novel. Their survival is assisted by the theatrical context that *The Satanic Verses* uses as a safety valve to protect these moments; unlike the miraculous yet naïve "noise" of the children in Rushdie's earlier novel, which is annihilated by Saleem's apocalyptic explosion at the end, as I argue in the last section of this paper, the theatrical nature of these sound effects enables them to survive in the postmodern text.

Apart from Bhabha's notion of the performative, I also rely on Mladen Dolar's, Stephen Connor's, and David Appelbaum's theories when I argue that voices, as opposed to sound effects, exemplify a didactic national address. Dolar, challenging

4. Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 291–322, p. 297.

Derrida's claim of logocentrism, argues that the latter has not taken into account the fact that besides enacting the "metaphysics of presence," the voice also had another side in the metaphysical tradition, a dangerous, threatening, uncontrollable aspect, which, instead of carrying an "irreducible individuality," threatened to tempt and destroy the subject. This dangerous side of the voice is manifested in music, challenging the dominance of pure logos: "music, in particular the voice, shouldn't stray away from words, which endow it with sense; as soon as it departs from its textual anchorage, the voice becomes senseless and threatening, all the more so because of its seductive and subversive powers."[5] Stephen Connor also detects an ambivalence in the voice already in the texts of Christian theology. First, the voice appears in these texts of the "Fathers" as a "regenerative flame," a miraculous entity that "makes possible division without diminution (embodying the emanation of the Son from the Father as pure *logos*), and second, as a "ventriloquial utterance," a dirty, corporeal notion, caused by a demon that has taken up residence inside, and emanating from the genitals or anus.[6] For Appelbaum it is the cough that distorts the texture of the voice: "[t]he cough commonly makes its appearance as an interruption to the voicing process. It is not as pernicious as the stutter or stammer or chronic hiccup but nonetheless takes the attending audience with it. It distorts the text and texture of voice with the unexpectancy of the body."[7] In other words, these arguments suggest that there is a hidden, dangerous, subversive side of voice, which is opposed to the pure, authoritative Logos, and which is akin to my definition of sound.

There is hardly any consensus among critics as regards the genealogy of the novel's narrative voice(s). Roger Y. Clark, for instance, claims that the voice of a "traditionally evil Satan . . . with help from sources as diverse as Shakespeare, Attar and Bulgakov . . . invades the text sporadically, sometimes to comment on morality and politics, and sometimes to influence events so that evil prevails over good."[8] Alex Knönagel, on the other hand, considers this voice to be part of a religious gene-

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5. Mladen Dolar, "The Object Voice," *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. Slavoj Žižek and Renata Salecl (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), p. 17.

6. "This is the voice not as fire or light, but as what we have just heard Tatian refer to as 'disorderly matter'; the cacophony or shit-voice, which is also, in hysterical approximation, the vagitus itself, the terrifying cry of birth that is at once the voice as the rending of a presence from the maternal genitals, and the voice of the genitals as rending" (Connor, Steven, "The Ethics of the Voice," *Critical Ethics: Text, Theory and Responsibility*, ed. Dominic Rainsford and Tim Woods [London: Macmillan, 1999], 220–37. pp. 224–25).

7. Appelbaum, David. *Voice.* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 3.

8. Roger Y. Clark, *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie's Other Worlds* (Montreal: McGill, 2001), p. 129.

alogy, claiming that *The Satanic Verses* can be read as the inversion of the Qur'an: "In the novel as well as in the Qur'an, the narrator is omniscient and occasionally refers to himself as 'I' or 'We.' "[9] Others, such as Joel Kuortti, emphasize the plurality of the novel's narrative voices, pointing out that *The Satanic Verses* wages a war on totality, i.e., on the hegemony of imperial English.[10] Gayatri C. Spivak, on the other hand, argues that despite the plurality of voices in the novel, it has a "rather aggressive central theme: the post-colonial divided between two identities: migrant and national."[11]

The theme of migration, already suggested by the motto ("Satan, being thus confined to a *vagabond*, *wandering*, *unsettled* condition") is also often discussed by critics: Gillian Gane, for instance, reads *The Satanic Verses* as "a novel about a world in motion, about the postcolonial migrant condition, about the coming together of incompatible realities in the global city,"[12] similarly to Peter Kalliney, who notes that the novel uses "Chamcha's harrowing international journey to illustrate the tribulations and consequences of our increasingly mobile existence."[13] Most readings, however, deal with religious questions and the "Rushdie affair," analyzing various aspect of the controversy ranging from debates between fundamentalism

9. Alex Knönagel, "*The Satanic Verses*: Narrative Structure and Islamic Doctrine," *The International Fiction Review* 18.2 (1991) 69–75, p. 70. Rushdie, however, claims that "the two books that were most influential on the shape this novel took do not include the Qur'an. One was William Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the classic mediation on the interpretation of good and evil; the other *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov" (Salman Rushdie, "In Good Faith," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* [London: Penguin, 1992], p. 403).

10. Joel Kuortti, " 'Nomsense': Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," *Textual Practice* 13.1 (1999) 137–146, p. 138.

11. Gayatri C. Spivak, "Reading *The Satanic Verses*," in *What is an Author?* Ed. Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993), 104–134, p. 107. For issues of narration see also Nicholas D. Rombes, "*The Satanic Verses* as a Cinematic Narrative," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 21.1 (1993) 47–53; and Janet Mason Ellerby, "Narrative Imperialism in *The Satanic Verses*," in *Multicultural Literatures Through Feminist/Poststructuralist Lenses*, ed. Barbara Frey Waxman (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 173–189.

12. Gillian Gane, "Migrancy, the Cosmopolitan Intellectual, and the Global City in *The Satanic Verses*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.1 (2002) 18–49, p. 18.

13. Peter Kalliney, "Globalization, Postcoloniality, and the Problem of Literary Studies," *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.1 (2002), 50–82, p. 51. See also Jaina C. Sanga, *Salman Rushdie's Postcolonial Metaphors: Migration, Translation, Hybridity, Blasphemy, and Globalization* (Wesport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2001); Peter Jones, "*The Satanic Verses* and the Politics of Identity," in *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, ed. D. M. Fletcher (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994), 321–333; Vijay Mishra, "Postcolonial Differend: Diasporic Narratives of Salman Rushdie," *ARIEL* 26.3 (1995).

and secularism to commenting on the reaction of Canadian Muslims to the affair.[14] Some critics regard the novel as a "deeply Islamic book,"[15] others claim that it is a profoundly Western text, which challenges monolithic fundamentalism."[16] My paper also offers a secular reading of *The Satanic Verses*. In my view, as it is suggested by the questions of the satanic narrator who comments on Gibreel's and Saladin's "flight" in the very first chapter, the trope has secular implications:

> I know the truth, obviously. I watched the whole thing. As to omnipresence and -potence, I'm making no claims at present, but I can manage this much, I hope. Chamcha willed it and Farishta did what was willed.
> Which was the miracle worker?
> Of what type – angelic, satanic – was Farishta's song?
> Who am I?
> Let's put it this way: who has the best tunes? (10)

Apart from referring to seduction, "tune" is also associated with popular culture, suggesting that the novel, besides parodying the Qu'ran, is in quest of a secular definition of good and evil. It evokes The Rolling Stones' hit song, "Sympathy for the Devil," which, similarly to the novel, portrays good and evil as inherently entangled, inseparable entities.[17] Englishness, depicted in terms of sound effects, also appears as a secular miracle in the novel; opposed to pedagogical voices, sounds evoke the indivisible story of England and its colonies, suggesting that *The Satanic Verses*, apart from rewriting the founding myth of Islam, can also be read as a peculiar national narrative.

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14. See, for instance, Amir Hussain, "Misunderstanding and Hurt: How Canadians Joined Worldwide Muslim Reactions to Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70.1 (2002) 1–32; Daniel Pipes, *The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West* (New York: Carol, 1990); Malise Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Wrath of Islam* (London: Hogarth, 1991); Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland, *The Rushdie File* (London: Fourth Estate, 1989); Ziauddin Sardar, *Distorted Imagination: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair* (London: Grey Seal, 1990); Sara Suleri, "Contraband Histories: Salman Rushdie and the Embodiment of Blasphemy," in *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, ed. D. M. Fletcher (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994), 221–236; and so on.

15. Suleri, p. 222.

16. As Suleri argues that "even though the writer may have been cast beyond the pale of retrievable life, his restoration inheres in the fact that he will always be read as a secular voice speaking against the impingement of a monolithic fundamentalism" (Suleri, p. 222).

17. "Just as every cop is a criminal / And all the sinners saints / As heads is tails / Just call me Lucifer / Cause I'm in need of some restraint."

The Sounds of Englishness

The Satanic Verses envisages a hybrid, continuously metamorphosing interaction between the "ghosts" of various nations as a model for any nation's existence: the plot begins with the flight of the main characters from India to England, yet the second chapter immediately takes the reader back to Mecca, and India also returns at the end of the novel. At one point, Gibreel defines London as a "Crusoe-city, marooned on the island of its past, and trying, with the help of a Man-Friday underclass, to keep up appearances" (439). Migrants appear as ghosts "haunting" England, reminding the English of their colonial past, on which their present is "marooned" (i.e., imprisoned, like Robinson in Defoe's novel). These haunting ghosts become integral to any national allegory that appears in this novel.

There are various other ghosts that haunt in *The Satanic Verses*. After the explosion of their plane, the two heroes find themselves in the garden of an ancient English lady called Rosa Diamond. She immediately becomes associated with the ghosts haunting the English nation:

> I know what a ghost is, the old woman affirmed silently. Her name was Rosa Diamond; she was eighty-eight years old; and she was squinting beakily through her salt-caked bedroom windows, watching the full moon's sea. And I know what it isn't, too, she nodded further, it isn't a scarification or a flapping sheet, so pooh and pish to all *that* bunkum. What's a ghost? Unfinished business, is what. (129)

William the Conqueror's ghost returns to haunt Rosa every night whenever the moon is full. She seems to have the magic ability to go back in time: "Nine hundred years! Nine centuries past, the Norman fleet had sailed right through this Englishwoman's home. On clear nights when the moon was full, she waited for its shining, revenant ghost" (129). The compulsive return of this vision, as a magic spectacle, produces a "solid and unchanging" notion of Englishness in the novel, momentarily restoring the otherwise fragmenting national allegories: "Repetition had become a comfort in her antiquity; the well-worn phrases, *unfinished business*, *grandstand view*, made her feel solid, unchanging, sempiternal, instead of the creature of cracks and absences she knew herself to be" (130).

Homi Bhabha comments on this episode in "DissemiNation," arguing that Rosa can be read as the allegorical figure of the English nation, or more precisely, of pedagogical Englishness:

> Gifted with phantom sight, Rosa Diamond, for whom repetition had become a comfort in her antiquity, represents the English *Heim* or homeland. . . . Constructed from the well-worn pedagogies and pedigrees of

> national unity – her vision of the Battle of Hastings is the anchor of her being – and, at the same time, patched and fractured in the incommensurable perplexity of the nation's living, Rosa Diamond's green and pleasant garden is the spot where Gibreel Farishta lands when he falls out from the belly of the Boeing over sodden, southern England.[18]

Bhabha reads Gibreel's figure as the living performative principle that disturbs the national pedagogy of Rosa, whose "returning gaze crosses out the synchronous history of England, the essential memories of William the Conqueror,"[19] as if he indeed became the "performative agent" set on the mission to subvert the English nation. According to Bhabha, it is this tension between Rosa's national pedagogy and the gesture of the migrant who proudly wears the clothes of Rosa's deceased husband, Sir Henry Diamond (thus tricking the police who are searching for illegal migrants, and who regard him as a respectable, old friend of Rosa) that writes the English nation in this novel. As he claims, Gibreel "mimics the collaborative colonial ideologies of patriotism and patriarchy, depriving those narratives of their imperial authority,"[20] and he becomes an "avenging migrant"[21] whose gesture shows that "the national memory is always the site of hybridity of histories and the displacement of narratives."[22]

Supporting his thesis, Bhabha endows Rosa and Gibreel with the role of embodying the pedagogical and the performative aspects of nationhood respectively. In my view, however, neither of these characters allegorizes these impulses so seamlessly; Bhabha attributes too much power to Gibreel, who is far from being an "avenging migrant," but rather becomes a helpless and paralysed medium through which different forces and impulses are enacted in the novel. Furthermore, Rosa's figure is also more complex and more dubious than Bhabha supposes; though she does indeed act as the allegorical figure of the English nation, providing a momentary vision of national unity, her allegory does not entirely function as a pedagogical construction. I argue that it is not Rosa's fragmenting allegorical figure that produces a "national unity" in this novel, and not even the *vision* of the Battle of Hastings, but that there are certain voices and sound effects involved in the recurring image of ghosts which are responsible for creating a momentary national unisonance.

But let us look at Gibreel's figure first. According to Bhabha, he becomes "the mote in the eye of history, its blind spot that will not let the nationalist gaze settle

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18. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," p. 317.
19. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," p. 318.
20. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," p. 318.
21. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," p. 319.
22. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," p. 319.

centrally."[23] Perhaps Gibreel does disturb the "nationalist gaze" when he mimics Sir Henry Diamond, but Bhabha never really takes into consideration the fact that he actually becomes imprisoned by Rosa Diamond, and performs various roles for her in this episode simply because of *her* will. Besides making him impersonate Henry Diamond, Rosa endows the migrant with several other roles. Gibreel "lands" in England exactly at the time when she is having a vision of the Battle of Hastings, and this makes her identify Gibreel with William the Conqueror, fulfilling her obsessive desire: "She closed, once more, her reminiscent eyes. When she opened them, she saw. Down by the water's edge, no denying it, something beginning to move. What she said aloud in her excitement: 'I don't believe it!' – 'It isn't true!' – 'He's never *here*!' " (130). It is only after impersonating the "essentialist memories" of William the Conqueror, to use Bhabha's phrase, that Gibreel becomes Sir Henry Diamond, and after the short episode of tricking the police, Rosa soon finds another role for him: he becomes her Argentine lover, Martín de la Cruz. Rosa keeps Gibreel imprisoned by her tremendous will; her "stories [are] winding round him like a web" (146), and he constantly feels a pain in his navel, as if he was indeed trying to be reborn, or, more precisely, recreated by Rosa Diamond. Even though Gibreel attempts to conquer the city, setting out on his mission with a map, "London from A to Z," which already suggests that he desires to conquer England, his mission fails; he loses his lover as well as his sense of himself, and returns to India as a raging schizophrenic, only to commit suicide. In other words, both the roles he plays for Rosa and his unfulfilled mission suggest that he is anything but an "avenging migrant"; he might disturb the "nationalist gaze" in the novel, but he definitely does not become an empowered figure in the narrative.

As for Rosa's vision of Englishness, it is also more complex than Bhabha assumes. First, the fact that the ghost of the Conqueror *haunts* her garden suggests that the kind of nation (and history) she allegorizes is far from being a sacred, linear, and pedagogical entity. Englishness appears to be a repetitive, ambiguous process for her, an "unfinished business" (129). Furthermore, the very fact that the allegory is founded upon the moment of conquest, the intrusion of the alien, makes this a strange emblematic moment of nationhood. Therefore, Englishness is not constituted through a didactic national pedagogy, but rather, it appears as a constantly recurring traumatic experience.

The Conqueror's ghost seems to produce its own sound effects:

> When the full moon sets, the dark before the dawn, that's their moment. Billow of sail, flash of oars, and the Conqueror himself at the flagship's prow, sailing up the beach between the barnacled wooden breakwaters and

23. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," p. 318.

> a few inverted sculls. – O, I've seen things in my time, always had the gift, the phantom sight. – The Conqueror in his pointy metal-nosed hat, passing through her front door, gliding betwixt the cakestands and antimacassared sofas, like an echo resounding faintly through that house of remembrances and yearnings; then falling silent; *as the grave*.
> (130, emphasis in the original)

William the Conqueror appears as a "resounding echo" that disturbs Rosa's otherwise silent world, invited and desired ("I long for them sometimes" [130], says Rosa). What we are witnessing in this episode is the return of the moment when the English nation was "founded" nine hundred years ago, and this moment seems to be entangled with the sound, the echo. Ironically, it is the echo (i.e., repetition) that provides magic unisonance, keeping the otherwise fragmenting nation together. The text seems to be aware of the fact that the transcendental is based on some kind of erasure, yet it does not seem to mind; the original "utterance" is secondary in this scenario, just like the fact that the myth of Englishness is based on the *Norman* conquest.

The sound appears as an entity locked away, buried in a "treasure chest" which opens only for the moment of the Conqueror's return:

> Nine hundred years ago all this was under water, this portioned shore, this private beach, its shingle rising steeply towards the little row of flaky-paint villas with their peeling boathouses crammed full of deckchairs, empty picture frames, ancient tuckboxes stuffed with bundles of letters tied up in ribbons, mothballed silk-and-lace lingerie, the tearstained reading matter of once-young girls, lacrosse sticks, stamp albums, and all the buried treasure-chest of memories and lost time. (129)

The mansion containing the buried chests, which seems to be waiting for the Conqueror to "glide betwixt" "empty picture frames," acts as the storehouse of memory: when the Norman heroes return, the whole house becomes alive. Rosa's vision appears to be a momentary revelation, as if we cast a glance into what is hidden in those chests, which (literally) contain the buried past.

Furthermore, at the very beginning of *The Satanic Verses* we find a similar list: when Gibreel and Saladin's airplane explodes, signifying the explosion of their past lives, identities, and homelands, the narrator also enumerates the things that they lose in that moment:

> Above, behind, below them in the void there hung reclining seats, stereophonic headsets, drink trolleys, motion discomfort receptacles, disembarkation cards, duty-free video games, braided cups, blankets, oxygen masks. Also ... mingling with the remnants of the plane, equally fragmented,

> equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mothertongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home.* (4)

Just as in the case of Rosa's list, the concluding metaphors are the most significant ones: after the vertigo of video games and stereophonic headsets, the words in italics, "*land, belonging, home,*" signify that this enumeration is also concerned with nation(s). These are "booming words," recalling various other sound effects in the novel, similarly to the "resounding" echo of William the Conqueror in the previous episode, and suggesting that the text retains these magic, unisonant moments of nationhood, blown up in the vertigo of homelessness, in some secret, hidden "treasure-chest of . . . lost time" (129).

But let us return to Rosa Diamond's sounds. When she recounts the memories of the battle of Hastings, the third person narrative switches to first person, as if to allow the reader to get closer to Rosa's own voice:

> – Once as a girl on Battle Hill, *she* was fond of recounting, always in the same time-polished words, – once as a solitary child, *I* found myself, quite suddenly and with no sense of strangeness, in the middle of a war. Longbows, maces, pikes. The flaxen-Saxon boys, cut down in their sweet youth. Harold Arroweye and William with his mouth full of sand. Yes, always the gift, the phantom-sight. – The story of the day on which the child Rosa had seen a vision of the battle of Hastings had become, for the old woman, one of the landmarks of her being. . . (130, my emphases)

First the third person narrator addresses Rosa as a "she," but before he manages to finish the sentence, Rosa interrupts and speaks as an "I," reminiscing about her first vision of William the Conqueror. The narrative seems to reproduce her very experience, letting us closer and closer to the secret of the nation she is in search of: a first person voice intrudes into the text, but the narrative soon shifts back to third person, suggesting that the reader is only allowed a glimpse of these magic moments of national unisonance.

Images of nationhood, then, are more complex in the novel than Bhabha presumes: neither Rosa's pedagogical Englishness, nor Gibreel's performative intervention appear to be antagonistic categories. Bhabha attributes too much power to Gibreel when he claims that the migrant acts is the performative principle in the novel. The opposition of the pedagogical and the performative appears in *The Satanic Verses*, but not as the antagonism of India and England; rather, it should be sought around the thin dividing line that differentiates the tropes of sound and voice.

Satanic Voices, Ghostly Sounds

Though the Conqueror appears as a "resounding echo" for Rosa Diamond, she keeps Gibreel imprisoned by singing siren songs to him in her crystal clear *voice*. Gibreel fails to understand her songs; the only thing he knows is that they make him unable to leave her enchanting realm:

> 'Blasted English mame,' he told himself. 'Some type of extinct species. What the hell am I doing here?' But stayed, held by unseen chains. While she, at every opportunity, sang an old song, in Spanish, he couldn't understand a word. Some sorcery there? Some ancient Morgan Le Fay singing a young Merlin into her crystal cave? Gibreel headed for the door; Rosa piped up; he stopped in his tracks. (144)

Whereas the sound effects of the Norman Conquest haunt the text as hesitant signs of some kind of national unisonance, Rosa's voice acts as a tempting, irresistible, didactic principle of Englishness, which literally imprisons Gibreel. I think it is not her vision of the Norman Conquest that endows her with this allegorical role, as Bhabha argues, but the apparently unlimited power of her voice. Her allegorical role inspires the stories she tells to Gibreel, and leaves no room for his intervention at all. He attempts to question the ancient lady only once: when a "pair of fine new horns" appear on Saladin's head, Gibreel tries to call Rosa's attention to this extraordinary incident, yet she only tells him that "there was nothing new under the sun, she had seen things, the apparitions of men with horned helmets, in an ancient land like England there was no room for new stories, every blade of turf had already been walked over a hundred thousand times" (144). Rosa literally silences Gibreel, leaving no room for his stories and his voice; it is her *voice* that becomes the pedagogical principle of Englishness, which remains powerful despite the fact that her body is fragmenting, and she dies on her 89th birthday.

Her voice, similarly to the voice of Satan in the religious chapters, parades as Logos in *The Satanic Verses*. It functions as an entity that both possesses and hides "the truth," the way David Appelbaum presumes: "[the fact that] we avoid attending to the voice that is ours reveals a hiddenness surrounding voice. The hiddenness is double. The note of imperishable recognition is hidden from the being whose voice it is; *and*, we of voice lie hiding from sounding the truth ourselves."[24] Appelbaum, heavily influenced by Derrida, recognizes the ambivalence of voice, which results from the tension between its promise to articulate "the

24. Appelbaum, pp. ix–x.

truth," as the most intimate attribute of the person who speaks, and the inevitable distance it evokes in relation to that very person. The voice seems both to contain and to hide the "truth" about oneself, and, therefore, has a double-tongued nature, just like in Rushdie's novel. The doubleness of the voice is indicated by the fact that the clear, articulated Logos may be interrupted by inarticulate sound effects, such as the cough, which threaten its apparently "omnipotent power." He regards the cough as "raw sound, unperiodic vibration, or plain noise,"[25] which is more corporeal than the voice, and this corporeality makes it even more dangerous: "Even if suppressed the cough is never mental and cannot be truthful. The cough, therefore, is to be feared."[26] Furthermore, it even becomes a devilish entity in his reading: "The cough is devilish and chthonic. It interrupts God's sermon of phonetic abundance and the soul's self-reiteration."[27]

Though the sound appears as an interruption in *The Satanic Verses*, functioning as a subversive element, it never becomes a devilish and corporeal entity opposed to the crystal clear Voice. On the contrary, it is the Voice that is a "devilish" principle in the novel, and, despite the fact that it appears as a disembodied entity, it has corporeal effects: the voice captures Gibreel at Rosa Diamond's mansion, dragging him by the navel. Contrary to this emphatic corporeality, the sound seems to be almost *disembodied*: we encounter the resounding echo of the Conqueror's *ghost*, as if the only possibility for the sound to interrupt the omnipotent power of Voice consisted in retreating into an incorporeal dimension, which seems to be the last hiding space that the Voice is not entirely able to control. In my view, the body cannot really function as a site of resistance in Rushdie's texts; it seems to be too fragmented, too weak, and too overwhelmingly subdued by the omnipresent Voice to launch a challenge of its own. It is the sound that subverts the false plenitude and omnipotent power of the Voice in his novels.[28]

What is more, the sound does not simply challenge this omnipotence, but attempts to offer a plenitude of its own. For instance, when Saladin is walking on the streets of London, desiring to find the "secrets of Englishness," sound effects seem to take him closer to it:

> Of material things, he had given his love to this city, London, preferring it to the city of his birth or to any other; had been creeping up on it,

25. Apperlbaum, p. 3.
26. Appelbaum, p. 5.
27. Appelbaum, p. 6.
28. For the analysis of the trope in *Midnight's Children* see Ágnes Györke, "Postmodern Nations in Salman Rushdie's Fiction," *The AnaChronist* 15 (2010) 135–155.

> stealthily, with mounting excitement, freezing into a statue when it looked in his direction, dreaming of being the one to possess it and so, in a sense, *become* it, as when in the game of grandmother's footsteps the child who touches the one who's *it* . . . takes over that cherished identity; as, also, in the myth of the Golden Bough. London, its conglomerate nature mirroring his own, its reticence also his; its gargoyles, the ghastly footfalls in its streets of Roman feet, the honks of its departing migrant geese. (398, emphasis in the original)

The sounds of "Englishness," the footfalls, the sounds of Roman footsteps, and the honks of the departing geese, are the secrets that Saladin desires to possess. These lead him towards a desired unisonance, or promise of initiation, a plenitude that echoes Rosa Diamond's vision of the Norman Conquest. Whereas Rosa's *Voice* imprisoned Gibreel, the *sounds* that Saladin is in search of promise an alternative plenitude that evokes a more ambivalent and less controllable notion of Englishness than the version imposed upon Gibreel by Rosa's didactic Voice.

The opposition of sound and voice reappears in several other episodes as well. Saladin's boss, Hal Valance, for instance, one of the most authoritative characters in the novel, is known as a person with a "Deep Throat voice" (265). After miraculously surviving the explosion of the airplane, Saladin attempts to re-establish his earlier life, and calls his boss to arrange his future employment. Valance briefly congratulates him on being alive, after which he fires him, without much ado, for ethnic reasons: "A busy man, Hal Valance, creator of *The Aliens Show* and sole owner of the property, took exactly seventeen seconds to congratulate Chamcha on being alive before beginning to explain why this fact did not affect the show's decision to dispense with his services" (264). Valance is not simply a ruthless and authoritative Briton, possessor of the voice of success, but he also becomes associated with the nation in the novel: "He owned a Union Jack waistcoat and insisted on flying the flag over his agency and also above the door of his Highgate home" (266). Just like Rosa Diamond, he is an allegorical figure of Englishness, and, similarly to her, he has a secret dream which is slightly at odds with his authoritative voice. After the rather brief phone call, Saladin recalls how he met Valance in his residence a few years ago, and how the self-made man led him into a room, a secret space, suggesting that he too has a hidden, secret self:

> After lunch, a surprise. Valance led him into a room in which there stood two clavichords of great delicacy and lightness. 'I make 'em,' his host confessed. 'To relax.' . . . Hal Valance's talent as a cabinet-maker was undeniable, and somehow at odds with the rest of the man. 'My fa-

> ther was in the trade,' he admitted under Chamcha's probing, and Saladin understood that he had been granted a privileged glimpse into the only piece that remained of Valance's original self, the Harold that derived from history and blood and not from his own frenetic brain.
>
> When they left the secret chamber of the clavichords, the familiar Hal Valance instantly reappeared. (269)

Valance's secret chamber, the spatial metaphor of his hidden self, stores the musical instruments that the businessman makes in his free time. The chamber seems to be the storehouse of voices which are not to be heard (Valance fabricates the instruments, but he probably could not play them even if he wanted to), and, paradoxically, it is these "unheard melodies" that speak about his self, as opposed to the Deep Throat Voice of the businessman. Valance's secret chamber also calls Rosa's "buried treasure chests" (129) to mind; in both cases, sounds are locked in secret spaces that the reader, just like Saladin, might only encounter for split seconds. Therefore, contrary to Appelbaum's theory, in Rushdie's novel these sounds do not simply function as devilish and corporeal entities interrupting the crystal clear Voice, the Logos, the appropriator of "truth," but they seem to contain an alternative truth of their own, however momentary and hidden. Therefore, though less assertive and more ambivalent, they are akin to Homi Bhabha's notion of the performative, that "prodigious, living principle," "by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process" (297).

Theatres of Survival

This "truth," however, does not bring back a hidden neo-Platonic ideal; *The Satanic Verses* puts its alternative "truths" into an ambiguous, theatrical context, which guarantees that they are able to survive in the postmodern text. In Rosa Diamond's case, for instance, the vision of William the Conqueror is described as a spectacle performed for the old lady, who always runs for her "opera glasses" (138) whenever something happens in her garden, watching the Norman fleet's return from the place that provides "grandstand view" (130). The reader feels that s/he is watching a performance through Rosa's eyes, as if those "essential" moments of English nationhood were nothing but spectacles performed on stage. The novel abounds in theatrical metaphors (spectacle, stage, studio, curtain, mimicry, etc.), and it is this literally performative context, to use Bhabha's term again, that enables the miraculous, quasi-Platonic sounds to survive. Unlike Rosa's didactic allegory, which falls apart, as if it were unable to bear the burden

of the incompatible stories the old lady is trying to tell, the performative vision of nationhood remains a viable option in *The Satanic Verses*.

The sounds (or more precisely, echoes) of Dickens's London also appear in the novel. When Saladin's colleague, Mimi Mamoulian, and her legendary lover, Billy Battuta, organise a party in London, the location of which is the "giant sound stage at the Shepperton film studios" (421), the performance is accompanied by the sound of footsteps. The guests "take pleasure in the huge re-creation of Dickensian London that stood within" (421): Dickens's characters appear, and the stage itself echoes the setting of his novels, recreating one of the most emblematic spaces of Englishness:

> But the guests are not disposed to grumble; the reborn city, even if rearranged, still takes the breath away; most particularly in that part of the immense studio through which the river winds, the river with its fogs and Gaffer Hexam's boat, the ebbing Thames flowing beneath two bridges, one of iron, one of stone. – Upon its cobbled banks the guests' gay footsteps fall; and there sound mournful, misty, footfalls of ominous note. (422)

The sound of footfalls fills this simulacrum of London: we hear no other voice apart from the guests' "gay" footfalls, producing "mournful," "misty" and "ominous" sounds. Furthermore, Dickens is not the only icon of Englishness that appears in this episode: the jealous Gibreel and the devilish Saladin perform the role of Shakespeare's Othello and Iago on this heavily allegorical stage. Gibreel appears with his beloved Allie, of whom he is terribly jealous, and Saladin, still angry with him for his behaviour at Rosa's place, and envious of his "ice queen," decides to take revenge on his old friend. It does not take long for Saladin to notice that Gibreel is suffering from paranoid jealousy, after which he takes up the role of Iago and starts to torment his "friend": "My Chamcha may be no Ancient of Venice, my Allie no smothered Desdemona, Farishta no match for the Moor, but they will, at least, be costumed in such explanations as my understanding will allow. – And so, now, Gibreel waves in greeting; Chamcha approaches; the curtain rises on a darkening stage" (425). That is, in "the sound stage at the Shepperton film studios" (421) we see the icons of Englishness performed in a theatrical way, just like on Rosa Diamond's porch: the studio acts as a closed microcosm, and the darkening stage, hidden by the curtain that rises only at the moment when Gibreel and Saladin identify with their Shakespearean roles, appears as a Chinese box, which promises to take us closer and closer to the secrets of Englishness, as if these hiding spaces protected the magic unisonance of sound effects.

At this point, it is necessary to return to Bhabha once more. Contrary to his argument, in my view, it is not Gibreel who challenges pedagogical Englishness in

the novel, but Saladin: whereas Gibreel becomes lost amidst Rosa's tales, never really succeeds in colonizing London, and commits suicide at the end, it is Saladin who survives. Saladin Chamcha (whose name echoes, besides the obvious reference to Kafka's Gregor *Samsa* and the Sultan Saladdin, that of *Salman* Rushdie as well as *Saleem* Sinai) is, unsurprisingly, an actor; before Hal Valance fires him, he works for Valance's TV programme *The Alien's Show*, where his task is to imitate voices and inarticulate noises: "If you wanted to know how your ketchup bottle should talk in its television commercial, if you were unsure as to the ideal voice for your packet of garlic-flavoured crisps, he was your very man. . . . On the radio he could convince an audience that he was Russian, Chinese, Sicilian, the President of the United States" (60). Due to this peculiar talent he becomes "the Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice" (60), recalling the number of children in *Midnight's Children,* and suggesting that it is he who possesses some kind of magic in the novel, not Gibreel. Despite the fact that he is like a parrot, a mimic man, literally, it is Saladin who is able to act, to *use* his voice to challenge the pedagogical version of Englishness. With his colleague, Mimi Mamoulian, he "ruled the airwaves of Britain" (60), as if their voice enacted the cacophony of the British nation. Also, when Mimi jokingly suggests that the two of them should get married, she envisages their union in terms of nations: " 'We should get married sometimes, when you're free,' Mimi once suggested to him. 'You and me, we could be the United Nations' " (60). It is Saladin, impersonating the myriad accents that colonise Britain, who challenges official, pedagogical versions of Englishness in the novel.

In other words, in *The Satanic Verses*, as opposed to the larger-than-life national allegory of *Midnight's Children*, which inevitably falls apart at the end of the novel, we find less romantic but more viable options: the most "authentic" sounds of the English nation become theatrical, when Rosa Diamond watches the return of William the Conqueror through her opera glasses, or Saladin and Gibreel perform Shakespearean roles, and the most promising challenge of pedagogical Englishness comes from a compromising mimic man. When Saladin returns to India, and sets out on his new path leading towards the heart of his homeland as well as a renewed sense of self ("[i]t seemed that in spite of all his wrong-doing, weakness, guilt – in spite of his humanity – he was getting another chance" [547]), he is not going towards a more authentic community, but is simply *led* towards another option.

Yet despite his compromise, I argue that Saladin's mimicry is an empowering gesture in the novel; just as Bhabha claims, it becomes a menace simply by suggesting that essentialized versions of Englishness have never been complete. In Bhabha's words:

> It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instances of colonial imitation come. What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence. By partial I mean both 'incomplete' and 'virtual'. It is as if the very emergence of the 'colonial' is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition *within* the authoritative discourse itself. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.[29]

For Bhabha, the ambivalence of mimicry empowers the migrant, paradoxically, to challenge pedagogical Englishness; the representation of the mimic man depends on the authoritative discourse, yet his act of mimicry also points to a limitation within this very same discourse, which reveals the subversive potential of his speech. The mimic, inarticulate voice of the Indian actor supplements pedagogical nationhood in the novel; his story completes the narrative of the Empire, suggesting that the cacophonic accents that colonise Britain reveal a dimension of Englishness which is not accessible to the English themselves, and which remains uncontrollable by official national pedagogies.

The fact that there are two apocalypses in the novel (one at the end of chapter seven and another at the end of chapter eight) underlines my contention that *The Satanic Verses* is the novel of survival. Rushdie often ends his novels with apocalyptic images (both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* terminate in spectacular explosions[30]), which act as final judgements upon his fragmenting, overburdened narratives, yet it is only in *The Satanic Verses* that Saladin does not become the victim of these. At the end of chapter seven, for instance, Gibreel's revenge upon London is portrayed in apocalyptic terms: after walking in the city with his trumpet called Azraeel, the exterminating Angel, he imagines that it is God's wrath that set the city on fire, whereas, of course, there is a completely logical explanation (the fire is caused by "secret agents" with the aim of killing Saladin's wife, who possesses too much information about the secret dealings of the

29. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 86.

30. See Teresa Heffernan, "Apocalyptic Narratives: The Nation in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 46.4 (2000) 470–491.

Metropolitan Police).[31] Saladin almost dies in this fire; attempting to rescue his friends, he breaks into the burning Shaandar Café, and it is Gibreel who saves him:

> Gibreel lets fall his trumpet; stoops; frees Saladin from the prison of the fallen beam; and lifts him in his arms. . . . Gibreel Farishta begins softly to exhale, a long, continuous exhalation of extraordinary duration, and as his breath blows towards the door it slices through the smoke and fire like a knife; – and Saladin Chamcha, gasping and fainting, with a mule inside his chest, seems to see – but will ever afterward be unsure if it was truly so – the fire parting before them like the red sea it has become, and the smoke dividing also, like a curtain or a veil; – until there lies before them a clear pathway to the door. (468)

The miraculous gesture of parting the fire, recalling the parting of the Red Sea, immediately becomes associated with theatrical categories: it is seen as the parting of *a curtain or a veil.* By locating the gesture in the realm of magic the narrative ensures that it does not threaten the prosaic order of the world – the logic of the Metropolitan Police and Saladin's reasoning, for instance. (One of the inhabitants of the Café gives a perfectly rational explanation: " 'What has happened here in Brickhall tonight is a socio-political phenomenon. Let's not fall into the trap of some damn mysticism' " [467].) The episode shows that the path of survival is also the path of theatricality, and the fact that the compromising mimic man, Saladin, is rescued by Gibreel, the larger-than-life Archangel, implies that his survival is far from being a triumph in the novel.

Nevertheless, he stays alive. His theatrical mimicry, just as momentary revelations of national unisonance, reveals a secret, hidden, often unwelcome, yet nonetheless magic dimension of Englishness. The resounding echo of William the Conqueror, the gay footsteps of the guests in the Dickensian microcosm, or the ghastly footfalls of the "Roman feet" in London speak about intangible, yet hopeful moments of nationhood, which are not controllable by pedagogical discourses. Similarly, Saladin, relying on the means of mimicry to assert difference, holds a

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31. Nevertheless, Gibreel thinks the flames are manifestations of a purifying fire, calling to mind the great fire of 1666, which put an end to the plague and provided a new life for the city's inhabitants. There are quite a few references to this fire in the text: the flames are described as " 'most horrid, malicious, bloody flames, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire' " (464), and, as we learn from Brians's notes, the quotation is from Samuel Pepy's description of the fire of 1666; also, when Saladin enters the burning Shaandar Café, a "pestilential wind drives him back" (466); and finally, at the end of the chapter, Gibreel imagines that the fire has indeed been a "purifying fire" (467).

mirror up to official discourses of Englishness, and reveals that the authoritative version is not complete in itself. Less grandiose than Saleem's India in *Midnight's Children*, yet more viable, these ephemeral sounds of Englishness survive in the text due to the theatrical context of their utterance, suggesting that *The Satanic Verses*, the novel of migration, metamorphoses, and dislocation, can also be read as a peculiar national narrative.

Ayşe Naz Bulamur

Representations of Istanbul in A. S. Byatt's "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye"*

This paper explores how Istanbul fantasies in A. S. Byatt's "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye" (1994) function as a critique of British patriarchal constructions of femininity. In *Orientalism Postmodernism and Globalism*, Bryan Turner argues that "the Orient in Western imagination is often perceived as the fantastic, it is associated with sexual fantasies" (98). Due to the European invention of Istanbul as "Oriental," Byatt's fifty-year-old female protagonist, Gillian Perholt, creates her own fairy tale by miraculously releasing a djinn from a Turkish glass vase in late twentieth-century Istanbul. The British narratologist imagines Istanbul through its nineteenth-century representations that picture the city as a fairytale-like place with Oriental daemons and magical vases. Istanbul's association with sensuality, however, is problematized as Gillian realizes that her wish for eternal love will not come true with the djinn. In fact, Istanbul, the city that had been the metaphor for gender inequality due to women's segregated lives in the Ottoman harems, becomes a setting, in Byatt's novella, where British male standards of beauty and the ideals of happy-ever-after love in fairytales are critiqued.

In a novella that brings together realism and fairy tale, A. S. Byatt chooses Turkey, a neighbor of Iraq, as a setting where the romanticization of marriage as the symbol of eternal love is critiqued during the Gulf War in 1991. Byatt's first-person narrator tells the story of a fifty-year-old divorcée, Dr. Gillian Perholt, who, unlike the princesses in fairy tales, did not live happily ever after with her unfaithful husband. While she suggests a distant imaginary world with the fairy tale opening "once upon a time," the narrator also hints that Gillian's story takes place at the time when the United Nations, primarily the United States, were bombing Iraq for invading Kuwait:

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*The extended version of this paper was published in Ayşe Naz Bulamur, *How Istanbul's Cultural Complexities Have Shaped Eight Contemporary Novelists (Byatt, Glazebrook, Atasü, Şafak, Tillman, Livaneli, Kristeva, and Pamuk): Tales of Istanbul in Contemporary Fiction* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011). The author is affiliated with Boğaziçi University.

The AnaChronisT 16 (Winter 2011): 117–134 ISSN 1219–2589 (print)

> At the time when my story begins the green sea was black, sleek as the skins of killer whales, and the sluggish waves were on fire, with dancing flames and a great curtain of stinking smoke. The empty deserts were seeded with skulls, and with iron canisters, containing death. . . . In those days men and women, including narratologists, were afraid to fly East, and their gatherings were diminished. Nevertheless our narratologist, whose name was Gillian Perholt, found herself in the air, between London and Ankara. (97)[1]

The narrator's comparison of the Persian Gulf to a black sea with dancing flames, and of Iraq's geography to empty deserts with skulls, smoke, and iron canisters evokes the gruesome results of the war that caused the death of at least a hundred thousand Iraqis. Europeans' fear of flying to the East, including Turkey, indicates their tendency to homogenously categorize countries beyond Greece as being dangerous and uncivilized. Ignoring the fact that Turkey's capital city Ankara lies at a distance of more than a thousand kilometers from Iraq, the British narratologist Gillian Perholt feels "an appropriate measure of fear" flying to a country that did not even partake in the Gulf War (97). Despite her fear, Gillian, who spends her days "interpreting, decoding the fairy tales of childhood," flies to Ankara for the "Stories of Women's Lives" conference, and, then, visits Istanbul to give a talk at the British Council (96).

Ironically, the country that Gillian hesitates to travel to enables a critique of female roles, as her wish to be attractive and loved indicates how successful women are affected by the romantic narratives in fairy tales. In "The Changing Function of the Fairy Tale," Jack Zipes writes that fairy tales have "spells, enchantments, disenchantments, resurrections, recreations" "more than any other literary genre," and they "enunciate the speaker/writer's position in the world, including his or her dreams, needs, wishes, and experience."[2] The fairy tale world Gillian invents in Istanbul also reflects her desire for love, beauty, and youth at the age of fifty. Having listened to her Turkish friend Prof. Orhan Rifat's lecture on the djinns in *The Arabian Nights* at the Ankara conference, Gillian creates her own fairy tale in which she gets to be the heroine, releasing an Oriental daemon from the old Turkish glass vase she buys in Istanbul. Described as an invisible being created by Allah from the flame of fire in the Koran, the djinn that comes to life in Gillian's Istanbul hotel room makes her dreams come true by restoring her youth and by making love to her. The themes of magic and wish fulfillment serve as a critique of stories that impose beau-

1. All parenthesized references are to this edition: A. S. Byatt, "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye," in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye: Five Fairy Stories* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 94–272.

2. Jack Zipes, "The Changing Function of the Fairy Tale," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 12 (1988) 7–31, p. 12.

tiful and happily married princesses as role models to female readers like Gillian. The Oriental daemon of the Arabian Nights teaches Gillian that a woman's wisdom is more valuable than her beauty by praising the intelligent and powerful non-Western women – the Turkish prodigy Zefir, the Queen of Sheba, and the Ottoman Sultana Roxelana – that he has met in his previous lifetimes. In offering Gillian romance for the first time since her divorce, the conversations and lovemaking of the British and the Oriental characters are the antithesis to the images of war and death that describe the time of the protagonist's travels. With the Islamic djinn, who uses a feminist rhetoric to show how beauty is culturally constructed, the East that evokes fear in Gillian also encourages her to be self-confident as a single middle-aged woman.

Gillian's Flight from England to Ankara and Her Shattered Ideals of Marriage

Framed in "once upon a time," Byatt's novella subverts the conventions of fairy-tales by beginning with Gillian's reflections on her marital frustrations during her flight to Ankara. Her husband's vacation in Majorca with his twenty-six-year-old mistress and his fax-message informing Gillian that he is never coming home expose the artificiality of stories that represent the wedding as a happy ending for women. The stories with wedding cakes, white gowns and flowers do not engage with the complexities of marriages that end in divorce. In Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye, Madonna Kolbenschlag argues that women are profoundly disillusioned when their marriages "fail to live up to the fantasy" and "end as life itself does, in some kind of separation and loss, in a mini-death."[3] Byatt also rejects the representation of wedding as the ultimate source of happiness in women's lives by comparing her female protagonist to a newly born woman after her divorce. On receiving her husband's fax, Gillian feels "like a prisoner bursting chains and coming blinking out of a dungeon" and "like a bird confined in a box, like a gas confined in a bottle, that found an opening, and rushed out" (103). Instead of "grieving over betrayal" and "loss of companionship," Gillian is content to be emancipated from her "grumbling and jousting" husband who has always been late for dinners and indifferent to her feelings (104). The divorce that evokes feelings of "lightness, happiness, and purpose" in Gillian, interrupts the myth of marriage as the ultimate source of bliss for women (103).

The happy-ever-after stories that narratologists tell in the "Stories of Women's Lives" conference in Ankara, nonetheless, prompt Gillian to reflect on her successful but lonesome life as a divorcée whose sons rarely keep in touch with her. As a story-

3. Madonna Kolbenschlag, *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), p. 151.

teller herself, Gillian is ironically taken in by the romantic paradigms in fairy tales and feels "redundant as a woman, being neither wife, mother nor mistress" (103). Paradoxically, the narratologist longs for the lives of the beautiful married princesses in stories which she criticizes for associating femininity with passivity and submissiveness. She ends her talk on Chaucer's tale of "Patient Griselda," for example, by commenting that "the stories of women's lives in fiction are the stories of stopped energies" (120). Despite her critical stance on the masculinist structures of fairy tales, Gillian acknowledges how they have shaped her concept of womanhood as she listens to her Turkish colleague, Orhan, telling a story from *The Arabian Nights*:

> I had this idea of a woman I was going to be, and I think it was before I knew what sex was (she had been thinking with her body about the swooning delight of Camaralzaman and Princess Budoor) but I imagined I would be married, a married woman, I would have a veil and a wedding and a house and Someone – someone devoted, like the thief of Baghdad, and a dog. I wanted – but not by any stretch of the imagination to be a narratologist in Ankara. . . (135)

In the story of Prince Camaralzaman and Princess Budoor, Orhan emphasizes the role of the two genies, who "fetch the sleeping princess from China and lay her beside" the young prince in order to debate which is the most beautiful. When the genies wake the "perfect beauties" in bed, they madly fall in love with one another and get married after overcoming many obstacles and hazards. Reading the stories of sleeping beauties meeting handsome princes, Gillian assumed that it was her destiny to find true love and live happily ever after. In "Feminism and Fairy Tales," Karen Rowe writes how female readers "transfer from fairy tales into real life those fantasies which exalt acquiescence to male power and make marriage not simply one ideal, but the only estate toward which women should aspire."[4] Since heroines in traditional fairy tales do not participate in the social sphere, Gillian had never thought in her childhood that she would be a narratologist attending conferences but a protagonist like Budoor with a devoted husband. Her longing for "the swooning delight" of Prince Camaralzaman and Princess Budoor exposes how love narratives in which the heroine's conflicts are resolved with marriage, give women hope that someday their prince will come and make their lives meaningful.

The themes of supernatural beings bringing love and happiness to the lives of beautiful princesses, in the stories Gillian listens to in Ankara, shape the way she later

4. Karen Rowe, "Feminism and Fairy Tales," in *Don't Bet On The Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*, ed. Jack Zipes (New York: Methuen, 1986), 209–223, p. 211.

imagines the djinn emerging from a Turkish glass vase in her Istanbul hotel room. It is significant that Gillian indulges in djinn fantasies in Istanbul and not in Ankara, where she is originally exposed to Orhan's speech foregrounding the role of genies "in bringing about a satisfactory adjustment to the normal human destiny" in the Nights (128). The narratologist's perception of Ankara in light of her childhood days in Yorkshire, where the air pollution gave her asthma, has an impact on her choice of Istanbul as a setting for her djinn story. The narrator remarks how Gillian associates Ankara with her hometown while listening to Orhan's discussion of genies in fiction:

> She [Gillian] was tired; she had a slight temperature; the air of Ankara was full of fumes from brown coal, calling up her childhood days in a Yorkshire industrial city, where sulphur took her breath from her and kept her in bed with asthma, day after long day, reading fairy-tales and seeing the stories pass before her eyes. (134)

Gillian's perception of Ankara as a modern industrial city that shares the urban problems of England's metropolises, where air pollution threatens the health of the population, prevents her from constructing a narrative of wish fulfillment. Turkey's capital city, where the air is full of "fumes from brown coal," does not resemble the "unchanging landscapes" of fairy tales "where it is always spring and no winds blow" (261). Gillian's conflation of Ankara with Yorkshire suggests that the former is not unfamiliar, different, Oriental enough to produce sexual fantasies with supernatural daemons. Ankara, the city that reminds Gillian of her childhood days when she tried to forget her asthma and the air-raids during World War II, is not the setting she chooses to invent a fairy-tale that vicariously satisfies her desire for love and happiness.

Gillian's depiction of Ankara in terms of its environmental problems in the 1990s, however, is worth comparing to the way she imagines Istanbul before flying there to give a talk at the British Council. The narrator foregrounds Gillian's excitement in visiting Istanbul for three days before going back to England: "She could not resist the idea of the journey above the clouds, above the minarets of Istanbul, and the lure of seeing the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus and the shores of Europe and Asia face to face" (97). It is not the minarets of Ankara but those of Istanbul, which have been the source of many fables and Greek myths, that attract the narratologist. It is no coincidence that Gillian refers to two attractions in Istanbul – the Bosphorus, and the Golden Horn, "a scimitar-shaped gulf," that divides the city's European side into historical and modern quarters – whose names originate in classical mythology. According to a Greek legend, as Jak Deleon explains in *The Bosphorus: A Historical Guide*, Zeus temporarily transformed his lover Io into a heifer to protect her from the spite and jealousy of his wife Hera. Io crossed the Bosphorus, giving the strait its name ("boos-foros," a Greek name for "cow-ford"),

and later gives birth on the shores of the Golden Horn to a girl, Keroessa, whose future son names the gulf, Khrysokeras, after his mother.[5] Gillian's "lure" of flying to Istanbul indicates her excitement about seeing a city that has actually been the setting of many stories, which she perhaps imagined seeing "pass before her eyes" in her childhood days in Yorkshire (97). It is in Istanbul, not in Ankara, after all, that nineteenth-century European travelers such as Edmondo De Amicis saw the phantoms of the Arabian Nights' characters pass before their eyes,[6] and Emilia Hornby compared the Ottoman kiosks to Aladdin's palace and gardens.[7]

Istanbul: The City of Nymphs and Djinns

On arriving to Istanbul, the narrator remarks that "Gillian Perholt settled in for a few days in the Peri Palas Hotel, which was not the famous Pera Palas, in the old European city across the Golden Horn, but a new hotel, of the kind Gillian liked best" decorated with Turkish tiles and carpets (166). Byatt's narrator clearly differentiates the fictional Peri Palas from the Pera, where Agatha Christie stayed during her visit to Istanbul in 1928.[8] The name of Peri Palas Hotel, meaning the palace of a fairy envisioned as a beautiful maiden, suits Gillian's perception of Istanbul in terms of Greek goddesses and foreshadows her fantasy of being the young heroine of a fairy tale. Abandoned by her husband for a woman half her age, Gillian sadly reflects how far she is from being a peri with her "dying skin," too old to meet the beauty standards of her British culture (164). Believing that "flying distorts the human body," she does not even dare to look at the mirror in her hotel room "for what stared out at her was a fleshy monster" (167). While taking a shower in her hotel room, on her first day in Istanbul, Gillian is frustrated to see that her "sad" middle-aged body cannot resist aging and decay:

> [She] looked ruefully down at what it was better not to look at, the rolls of her midriff, the sagging muscles of her stomach. She remembered, as she reached for her towel, how perhaps ten years ago she had looked complacently at her skin on her throat, at her solid enough breasts, and had thought herself well-preserved, unexceptionable. . . . And now it was all going, the eyelids had soft little folds, the edges of the lips were fuzzed, if she put on lipstick it ran in little threads into the surrounding skin. (186)

5. Jak Deleon, *The Bosphorus: A Historical Guide* (Istanbul: Intermedia Yayınları, 1999).
6. Edmondo De Amicis, *Constantinople*, trans. Stephen Parkin (London: Hesperus Classics, 2005).
7. Emilia Hornby, *In and Around Stamboul* (Philadelphia: James Challen & Son, n. d.).
8. Agatha Christie, *An Autobiography* (London: Collins, 1977).

In *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir writes that women are "haunted by the horror of growing old" and long to preserve their "dying youth" in order to be desirable in the male gaze.[9] Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* also argues that even "successful working women," like Gillian, equate beauty and youth, and, therefore, are infused with "a dark vein of self hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control."[10] Nostalgically remembering the well-preserved body she had in her forties, the narratologist perceives the wrinkles on her face not as signs of maturity but of degeneration, and drops her head sadly as she sees "her death advancing towards her" in the mirror covered with steam (186). Gillian's choice of the Peri Palas – a fairy palace – itself shows how much she is affected by the images of physical perfection in fairy tales and is taken in by nineteenth-century narratives that depict a fantastical Istanbul with magical beings such as djinns and houris.

Objectified by the British patriarchy as a redundant woman not beautiful enough to keep a husband, Gillian partakes in the Orientalist gaze by comparing the stores of Istanbul's Grand Bazaar to "Aladdin's caves full of lamps and magical carpets, of silver and brass and gold and pottery and tiles" (176). Amazed to be surrounded with the oriental props depicted in storybooks, Gillian compares the five-century-old covered market to the cave where Aladdin finds a magical lamp in the *Nights*. The narrator reflects on Gillian's excitement when shopping with Orhan in a store owned by one of his former graduate students: "And suddenly Gillian felt well again, full of life and singing with joy . . . hidden away in an Aladdin's cave made of magical carpets with small delightful human artifacts" (177–8). Imagining herself in a supernatural cave in Istanbul, Gillian does not listen to the shop owner's complaint that it is hard to make a profit by importing carpets since it is difficult to please western tourists whose tastes in color and material change every year. She also dismisses Orhan's remark that the carpet-seller has a Ph.D. in English literature, which indicates that teaching does not provide an adequate income to live on in Istanbul. Instead of reflecting on the high cost of living in the city in the 1990s, the narratologist imagines the Grand Bazaar as a fantastical place where she can find a dusty bottle with a djinn to make her wishes come true. In a shop owned by another of Orhan's ex-students, Gillian inquires about a transparent glass vessel with a "spiral pattern of opaque blue and white stripes," which the seller believes to be either çeşm-i bülbül (nightingale's eye) or recent Venetian glass (180). For Gillian, the glass will be valuable only if it is Turkish. "It probably isn't," says the shop

9. Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), pp. 575–6.

10. Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), p. 10.

owner: "I will sell it to you as if it were Venetian, because you like it, and you may imagine it is çeşm-i bülbül and perhaps it will be, is, that is" (181). Gillian's inclination to see the recent Venetian glass as an old and magical nightingale's-eye bottle indicates her desire to construct her own Aladdin story of Istanbul. Her shopping experience also indicates how Turkish merchants profit from the European fascination with the Orient by selling "chased daggers," "magical carpets," "dangling lamps and water-shakers from the baths" at the Grand Bazaar where western tourists, like Gillian and Archie, hope to have an Arabian Nights experience in Istanbul (176).

Gillian and the Djinn Share Stories of Beauty, Love, and Marriage in Istanbul

While Gillian imagines the Venetian glass vessel to be a nightingale's-eye bottle, Orhan reflects back on a pre-industrial Istanbul whose inhabitants could hear the sound of the nightingales instead of the heavy traffic and sirens of the ships passing through the Bosphorus. As the merchant explains to Gillian that the glass is transparent and opaque like the nightingales' eyes, Orhan comments on how the city's environmental problems and technology have changed Istanbulites' lives: " 'Before pollution,' said Orhan, 'before television, everyone came out and walked along the Bosphorus and in all the gardens, to hear the nightingales of the year. . . . A whole people, walking quietly in the spring weather, listening' " (180). Orhan's critique of Istanbulites watching television at home rather than enjoying the Bosphorus, and his nostalgic look at the past when the city was free of air and noise pollution, however, are the themes that are glossed over in the Grand Bazaar scene. Not responding or even paying attention to her friend's social critique, Gillian says: "I must have this. But if it is çeşm-i bülbül it will be valuable" (181). Gillian's indifference to the fact that Istanbul has changed with industrial developments and that people are not in tune with nature hints at her preference to see the city in terms of its Orientalist stereotypes rather than its social climate in the 1990s. We should note, however, that Orhan's account of Istanbulites walking quietly and listening to the nightingales on the shores of the Bosphorus is another fantastical narration that idealizes Istanbul's past. Orhan's imagination of Istanbul in the spring with nightingales is constructed by the early twentieth-century Turkish poetry from which the shopkeeper anonymously quotes: "In the woods full of evening the nightingales are silent / The river absorbs the sky and its fountains / Birds return to the indigo shores from the shadows" (181). In highlighting the discursivity of Orhan's nostalgia for Istanbul's past by providing a quotation from a Turkish poem, the novella represents another textual construction of Istanbul, similar to the way Gillian imagines the city through the Aladdin story in the *Nights*.

When she is back in her hotel room, Gillian decides to "bring the glass" she bought from the Grand Bazaar "to life" by holding the bottle under running water and turning the stopper "round and round" (187). While she is rubbing the "dust-spots with thumbs and fingers," the glass turns blue, the stopper miraculously flies out of the bottle and falls into the basin, and a djinn covered with a dark cloud takes up most of her hotel room. Byatt's narrator describes the djinn, released from the nightingale's-eye bottle, in terms both of Gillian's contemporary history and of the stories Orhan tells in the Ankara conference:

> And out of the bottle in her hands came a swarming, an exhalation, a fast-moving dark stain which made a high-pitched buzzing sound and smelled of woodsmoke, of cinnamon, of sulphur, of something that might have been incense, of something that was not leather, but was? The dark cloud gathered and turned and flew in a great paisley or comma out of the bathroom. I am seeing things, thought Dr. Perholt. . . (188)

In the absence of Gillian's direct speech in this scene, the reader has access to the protagonist's ways of seeing the djinn only through the narrator's point of view, which ironically associates the supernatural being with commercial and chemical substances like leather and sulphur. The djinn is further removed from his religious context in the Koran as he watches the tennis match between Boris Becker and Henri Leconte, grabs the former from the TV screen, and brings him to Gillian's bedroom. The djinn's interruption of the tennis match serves as a proof of his existence as the commentator on TV announces that Becker has had a seizure and cannot go on with the game. The similarities between Orhan's references to djinns in his lecture and Gillian's perception of the flying daemon also highlight the discursivity of the narratologist's fantasy, which is based on her friend's retelling of Scheherazade's stories. The depictions of "the transparent and solid" daemon as a dark cloud emerging in Gillian's bathroom derive from Orhan's description of djinns as "a swaying black pillar that touched the clouds" and as being "sometimes visible, sometimes invisible; they haunt bathrooms and lavatories, and they fly through the heavens" (126–130). The narratologist creates her own fairy tale, which is based on Orhan's narration of djinns in the Camaralzaman and Budoor story, by perceiving the European glass as çeşm-i bülbül and bringing the dusty bottle to life in late-twentieth-century Istanbul.

The djinn, the one that Gillian releases from a Turkish glass vase, also enables a critique of patriarchal constructions of beauty. The text evokes the djinns with supernatural powers in storybooks to underline how the ideal female body image is destructive for women who resort to drastic measures like plastic surgery in order to look beautiful. In her conversations with the djinn, Gillian confesses that an attrac-

tive body is what she has "desired hopelessly in the last ten years": " 'I wish,' said Gillian, 'for my body to be as it was when I last really *liked* it, if you can do that' " (197–198). Gillian's first wish indicates how much she has internalized the beauty myth, which, for Wolf, is perpetuated by magazines that represent attractiveness as a woman's most valuable asset, and profit from selling the secrets of having "a gorgeous figure" and a younger-looking skin. The djinn cannot understand Gillian's wish for temporal and transitory qualities which will not delay her destined return to dust. Nevertheless, he grants her wish by magically transforming her into a thirty-five-year-old woman with full breasts, taut stomach, smooth thighs, round nipples, and a neck without wrinkles. Most importantly, the djinn does not grant her physical perfection but gives her self-confidence to overcome her insecurities as a middle-aged woman. Gillian learns to appreciate her body despite its flaws such as "her appendix scar" and the "mark on her knee where she had fallen on a broken bottle" (199). She is "happy to see and feel" her face which is "not beautiful" but "healthy and lively" and breaks away from the ideals of beauty by embracing her body with its imperfections: "I shall *feel* better, I shall like myself more. That was an *intelligent* wish, I shall not regret it" (199). Gillian's wish-making problematizes the association of the East with sensuality and the West with rationality as the Oriental daemon teaches his British companion not to be physically oriented, and that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

In restoring Gillian's self-confidence to enjoy her own body, the djinn underlines the artificiality of standards of beauty that are, in any case, socially and historically constructed. He observes that ample women were desirable in the past and now people prefer "ladies without breasts, like boys" (200). He questions the prevalent constructs of a thin female body by finding Gillian's figure "a little meagre" and by wishing her to be "ripe" and "rounder" (198). The old tourist guide Gillian meets at the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations regretfully agrees with the djinn that skinny androgynous female bodies with small breasts seem more fashionable than plump women. He tells her how ancient people worshipped fat goddesses because they associated "rolls of fat" with "strength," "good prospects of children," and "living through the winter," and thinness with rough labor, sickness, or starvation (137). The guide says: "We don't like our girls fat now . . . we like them to look like young boys, the boys out of the Greek gymnasium round the corner" (139). Both the Oriental daemon and the Turkish tour guide claim that women's efforts to be fit, athletic, and skinny distort the feminine features of their bodies – curves, bellies, and breasts – and make them look masculine. Ironically, the Istanbul hotel, named as the palace of a beautiful maiden, becomes a setting where the artificiality of Gillian's beauty fantasies is exposed, and where late twentieth-century women's extreme efforts to be slim, and, therefore, desirable for the masculine gaze are critiqued.

While questioning Gillian's standards of beauty, the djinn deconstructs the bliss of marriage by telling the stories of his conversations with the Queen of Sheba and Zefir, who did not want to be imprisoned in the domestic sphere. The djinn's stories that narrate matrimony from women's points of view subvert the images of happily married wives in both history and fiction. In telling the story of the Prophet Solomon – David's son in the Koran – from the perspective of his bride-to-be, the djinn gives voice to the Queen of Sheba's critique of marriage as an institution that obliges women to be subservient to their husbands. The djinn states: "She would say to me as, as her spies brought her news of his triumphal progress across the desert, the great Suleiman, blessed be his memory, she would say 'How can I, a great Queen, submit to the prison house of marriage, to the invisible chains which bind me to the bed of a man?' " (205). Although attracted to Solomon, the Queen did not want to jeopardize her freedom by surrendering to her husband's commands and fulfilling his sexual desires. The djinn advised her that marriage was not the only option for women and she should not get married simply to fulfill her society's expectations. Most importantly, the silenced subservient Queen in the Koran becomes a spokesperson for gender equality in the djinn's story. The Koran states that the Queen of Sheba from Yemen and "her people were worshipping the sun instead of Allah," and, on meeting with the Prophet Solomon, the Queen admitted that she had "wronged" herself by not believing in Allah and willingly changed her faith.[11] The djinn problematizes the depictions of the obedient Queen in the Koran by praising her richness of mind and her refusal to be in a subservient position in marriage.

The djinn verifies the Queen's comparison of marriage to a "prison house" by telling the story of Zefir, who was married at fourteen to the merchant of Smyrna, "kind enough to her, kind enough, if you call treating someone like a toy dog or a spoiled baby or a fluffy fat bird in a cage being kind" (218). Zefir was dehumanized in a marriage in which she was treated as a living toy of a husband who was much older than she was. She repressed her anger at the merchant, who ignored her artistic skill in "sewing huge pictures" of stories in silk, and pretended to be a content wife with a fake smile (219). Imprisoned in her "cage," she mournfully reflected that she did not have any opportunity to improve her skills because it was not socially acceptable for women to be wise and learned:

> She was a great artist, Zefir, but no one saw her art. . . . She told me she was eaten up with unused power and thought she might be a witch – except, she said, if she were a man, these things she thought about would be ordinarily acceptable. If she had been a man, and a westerner, she would

11. *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentaries*, trans. Nurettin Uzunoğlu (Istanbul: Acar Matbaacılık, 1998), 27:24.

> have rivaled the great Leonardo, whose flying machines were the talk of the court of Suleiman one summer – (219–220)

With Zefir's story, the djinn hints that the reason for male dominance in arts and sciences is not because women lacked creative genius but because their lives were limited to the domestic sphere. Women in the fifteenth- and sixteenth centuries were treated as idle playthings of men and were not allowed to become famous painters like Leonardo da Vinci or poets like William Shakespeare. In "A Room of One's Own," Virginia Woolf argues that even if Shakespeare had had a gifted sister, her parents would have encouraged her to stay at home, "mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books or papers."[12] According to Woolf, a woman who tried to use her artistic talents would have been an outcast, regarded as "half witch, half wizard" in the Elizabethan age when it was unthinkable for women to have Shakespeare's genius.[13] Considering intelligence and creativity as masculine traits, Zefir also "thought she might be a witch" and "was eaten up with unused power," which could have produced many drawings and paintings (220). In highlighting Zefir's oppression in marriage, the djinn foregrounds how the absence of women in the arts intersects with patriarchal and ethnic ideologies that privilege the works of white western men.

The djinn not only disrupts the myth of happily-ever-after marriages, but also the nineteenth-century constructions of subservient female slaves in the Ottoman harem by telling the stories of strong women who determined the fate of the Empire. The djinn's narration of Süleyman the Magnificent's Christian concubine, Roxelana, known in Turkish as Hürrem, foregrounds the hybridity of the harem and the role of the foreign Sultanas in the Empire's power network. The djinn shows how non-Muslim slave-girls, portrayed by nineteenth-century European travelers (e.g. Edmondo De Amicis and William Thackeray[14]) as idle sexual objects of men, could marry the Sultan and rule the Ottoman palaces with their treacherous intrigues. The djinn tells Gillian how Roxelana entered the harem as a Ukrainian slave-girl, "defeated the Sultan's early love Gülbahar," "bore him a son," and became the legal wife of Süleyman, "which no concubine, no Christian, had ever achieved" (209). In order to secure the throne for her eldest son, Selim, Roxelana persuaded the Sultan that his son with Gülbahar was deceitful, and had Mustafa and his pregnant Circassian lover strangled with silk cords. The djinn's story underlines how cunning and shrewd women like Roxelana were able to influence the Sultan's com-

12. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1991), p. 51.

13. Woolf, p. 53.

14. William Makepeace Thackeray, "A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo," in *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray* (n.p.: Smith, 1884), XII, 585–733.

mands and determine the successors to the throne. Foregrounding Roxelana's role as "political confidante to the sultan,"[15] Leslie Peirce also remarks in *The Imperial Harem* that "concubine mothers, women from Christian territories enslaved and converted to Islam – were also able to claim a share in the exercise of sovereign authority through their roles *within* the family."[16] The djinn shows how De Amicis's representations of the harem inmates as "pleasing and decorative feminine creatures" "fond of childish games"[17] gloss over the fact that some foreign slaves like Roxelana had power to control the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

In telling the stories of the Queen of Sheba, Zefir, and Roxelana, the djinn challenges the objectification of the harem inmates in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel literature by focusing not on women's physical appearance but on their social skills. As Mary Roberts writes in "Contested Terrains," many European travelers – Lady Montagu,[18] Hornby, Thackeray, and De Amicis – were involved in "Orientalist eroticism" by focusing on the slave-girls' beauty, make up, skin complexion, and elegant dresses. Indira Ghose[19] and Reina Lewis[20] also argue that while elevating the harem inmates' art-like physiques, women writers like Hornby adopted an imperialist gaze by attributing intelligence to the British and traditional female roles of passivity and beauty to the Ottoman ladies. The djinn, on the other hand, does not foreground the Queen's, Zefir's, and Roxelana's physical appearance but their wisdom in questioning patriarchy, their talent for drawing pictures, and their power to rule their countries. The djinn's story of the "long-dead Turkish prodigy" and "a great artist" Zefir, for example, goes against the "bird-of-paradise-like uselessness of the Turkish belle," as presented in Emilia Hornby's *In and Around Stamboul*,[21] by showing that achieving physical perfection was not the only employment of Ottoman women. In his conversations with Gillian, the djinn also emphasizes how he values women's personalities and intelligence more than their looks, which are transitory: The Queen of Sheba's "body was rich and lovely but her mind was richer and lovelier and more durable" (205). The djinn's stories teach

15. Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 63.

16. Peirce, p.17.

17. De Amicis, pp. 165–6.

18. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, ed. Malcolm Jack (London: Virago Press, 1993).

19. Indira Ghose, *Women Travelers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

20. Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996).

21. Hornby, p. 68.

Gillian to move away from bodily concerns by representing women not as sexual objects but as individuals with artistic skills. The supernatural daemon that comes to life in Istanbul challenges the classification of sexes into social and domestic spheres by showing how women, as early as the ancient times, questioned their gender roles, had artistic talents, and were political actors in the Ottoman Empire.

"Tell me your story . . . tell me anything," says the djinn to Gillian, and his narrations of powerful queens and sultanas cause her to reflect on the fact that although she and her college friends "were all clever like Zefir" and "had greed for knowledge," they naïvely perceived marriage as the highest achievement for women: "We were a generation when there was something shameful about being an unmarried woman, a spinster – though we were all clever" (233). Gillian tells the djinn that achieving academic success did not bring much happiness and self-confidence to her circle of female friends, who felt insecure for not being attractive enough to find the Prince Charming of their dreams. They knew that "stories happen to 'beautiful women,' whether they are interesting or not,"[22] as Wolf writes, and "the heroines are chosen for their beauty, not for anything they do,"[23] as Marcia Lieberman states. Gillian's preoccupation with her looks shows how the images of pretty and well-dressed princesses cause physical dissatisfaction in girls who perceive beauty as the prerequisite for love. She foregrounds her obsession with beauty by telling the djinn how she compared her body with that of her bride-to-be friend while they were looking at the mirror in the latter's bedroom the night before the wedding: "First in the mirror, and then I looked down at myself. And then I looked across at her – she was pearly-white and I was more golden. And she was soft and sweet" (236). While Gillian was examining her friend's fair skin, associated with beauty in fairy tales such as "Snow White," the bride assured her that she would find a man "to go mad with desire for" her flat belly and "beautifully rising breasts" (236). If not in life, Gillian wanted to vicariously satisfy her desire for beauty and passion by playing the role of Ophelia in a student production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but was frustrated to be given the part of Hamlet's mother Gertrude instead. Gillian's fascination with her friend's white wedding and her desire to be the beautiful lover on stage indicate how much she internalized the myths of true love in fairy tales.

Not having been a flirt in college and living as a lonely divorcée in her fifties, Gillian fulfills her desire for passion and intimacy by making her second wish that the djinn would love her. In *Orientalism postmodernism and globalism*, Bryan

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22. Wolf, p. 61.

23. Marcia Lieberman, "Some Day My Prince Will Come," in *Don't Bet On The Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*, ed. Jack Zipes (New York: Methuen, 1986), 187–200, p. 189.

Turner argues that "the Orient in Western imagination is often perceived as the fantastic, it is associated with sexual fantasies" (98). Emblematized as Oriental, Istanbul, the city with djinns, harem, and the polygamous Ottoman Sultans, is a perfect setting for Gillian to make love to the djinn she releases from a Turkish glass vase in the late twentieth century. While Gillian stares at "his sex coiled like a folded snake and stirring," the djinn says: "maybe you have wasted your wish, for it may well be that love would have happened anyway, since we are together, and sharing our life stories, as lovers do" (244). Byatt's narrator tells how Gillian makes love to the daemon, who finds her "eminently lovable," in her hotel room in Istanbul:

> And without moving a muscle Dr. Perholt found herself naked on the bed, in the arms of the djinn.
>
> Of their love-making she retained a memory at once precise, mapped on to every nerve-ending, and indescribable. . . . He could become a concentrated point of delight at the pleasure-points of her arched and delighted body; he could travel her like some wonderful butterfly, brushing her here and there with a hot, dry, almost burning kiss, and then become again a folding landscape in which she rested and was lost, lost herself for him to find her again, holding her in the palm of his great hand, contracting himself with a sigh and holding her breast to breast, belly to belly, male to female. (246–247)

It is significant to note that Byatt's narrator sustains the images of meek princesses in fairy tales by ascribing passivity to Gillian and authority to the djinn in the depictions of their lovemaking. The protagonist is the one being kissed, like Snow White, or being made love to. She is not depicted as a powerful and self-confident woman, who can have control over and lead the djinn in bed. It is the male figure that "travels" the female body like a "wonderful butterfly" while Gillian simply "rests" or loses "herself for him to find her again." The narrator further ascribes sexual passivity to Gillian by comparing her body to "arching tunnels under mountains through which he pierced and rushed" (246). The narrative, which represents the two characters' intercourse as the djinn's act of piercing, traveling, and rushing through Gillian's body, operates within the masculinist discourse that attributes authority and activity to men.

By having her protagonist wish first for beauty and then for love, Byatt's story seems to be affirmative of the patriarchal message in fairy tales that a woman's happiness depends on her ability to find a man who would love and take care of her for a lifetime. In exposing how the images of happily married beautiful princesses are detrimental to women by foregrounding Gillian's fear of being a spinster in college and her insecurity over her ageing body, the story also deploys the conventions of fairy tales by granting romance to the narratologist who looks thirty-five in her fifties. Like

the princes in "Snow White" and "Cinderella," who help damsels in distress by giving life to the former with a kiss and saving the latter from her cruel stepsisters, the djinn eases Gillian's feelings of solitude and self-hatred by making love to her. As Lisa Fiander writes in *Fairy Tales and the Fiction of Iris Murdoch, Margaret Drabble, and A. S. Byatt*, "the themes of the fairy tale being referenced are simultaneously interrogated and reinforced"[24] in "The Djinn," in which the protagonist finds love through the emergence of a strong, powerful male figure from a magical glass vase. Nevertheless, making the heroine's wishes come true, Byatt's novella also subverts the cliché endings of fairy tales as Gillian gives her third wish to the djinn, who leaves the narratologist promising that he will visit her from time to time. "If you remember to return in my life-time," responds Gillian, and "If I do" says the djinn (265). The text ends with the djinn briefly encountering Gillian in a glass shop and leaving with the same promise that he might come back again. The open ending of the story deviates from the myths of romance in fairy tales, as a happy-ever-after love is unobtainable for Gillian and she turns back to her lonesome life after the djinn's departure.

Istanbul: The City That Lies outside Gillian's Hotel Bedroom with the Djinn

Istanbul's social and environmental issues that do not fit into "a condition of beautiful stasis, more like a work of art" in fairy tales, however, are glossed over in the narrator's story that grants Gillian's wishes for beauty and love (261). The narrative that represents Gillian's stay in Istanbul through her conversations with the djinn does not adequately represent the city outside her room in the Peri Palas Hotel in 1991. Gillian's fantasies of buying a glass vase with a genie and her wish-making process cloud Turkey's political complexities, which Professor Orhan hints at while the two share their life stories in Istanbul. Accompanying the narratologist during her stay in Turkey, Orhan comments how dress and hair are markers of one's religious and political identity, and how a beard is associated with Islam or Marxism, which are both considered detrimental to the unity of the secular Republic. The narrator informs the reader of Orhan's conflict with the government that did not allow him to teach at Istanbul University without shaving his beard:

> Orhan told of his tragic-comic battle with the official powers over his beard, which he had been required to shave before he was allowed to teach. A beard in modern Turkey is symbolic of religion or Marxism, neither acceptable. He had shaved his beard temporarily but now it flourished anew,

24 Lisa M. Fiander, *Fairy Tales and the Fiction of Iris Murdoch, Margaret Drabble, and A. S. Byatt* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 8.

> like mown grass, Orhan said, even thicker and more luxuriant. The conversation moved to poets and politics: the exile of Halicarnassus, the imprisonment of the great Nazım Hikmet. (150)

Orhan's battle with "the official powers" foregrounds the state's insistence on preserving Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's ideals of secularism by not allowing men to wear a beard, with religious or Marxist implications, in government facilities including schools, courts, and civil service offices. Orhan challenges the government's power to interfere with a professor's physical appearance in the classroom by growing his beard after shaving temporarily. Since the narrator does not provide Orhan's direct speech but gives a brief summary of his conflict with the university officials, the reader has a limited view on how students' and professors' appearance was affected by the state politics in the 1990s. The passage that goes beyond Gillian's encounter with the djinn is also cut off abruptly by the narrator who does not give an account of the rest of Orhan and Gillian's conversations, which move "to poets and politics." The narrator briefly mentions that the two characters discuss the imprisonment of the Turkish poet, Nazım Hikmet, for promoting Marxism and the novelist, Cevat Şâkir Kabaağaçlı (known as the Fisherman of Halicarnassus), for attacking the capital punishment of men who did not fulfill their obligatory military duty in the early years of the Republic. By not providing any background information on why Kabaağaçlı and Hikmet were punished, the narrator chooses not to explore how Orhan is not the only poet in battle with "the official powers" and how writers since the 1920s have been imprisoned or exiled for going against Turkish nationalist ideologies. The narrator's decision to cut the characters' conversation on politics short and move on to their discussion on genies indicates how Istanbul is represented through the fantastical themes in the *Nights* instead of the city's historical context in 1991. The abrupt shift from the imprisonment of Turkish poets to supernatural daemons in Byatt's text self-reflexively hints at the workings of Orientalist discourses, which make Istanbul Oriental by excluding the city's social and political complexities.

In recounting Gillian's adventures in Istanbul, the narrator also hints at the fictionality of the djinn by commenting: "She was later to wonder how she could be so matter-of-fact about the presence of the gracefully lounging Oriental daemon in a hotel room" (202). With Gillian's reference to the self-reflexivity of Turkish tales, introduced with "perhaps it happened, perhaps it didn't," the narrator highlights how story-telling and truth-telling are interweaved in the protagonist's encounter with the djinn, which, like glass, is paradoxically both "transparent and solid," and both "there and not there" (254, 266). Byatt's narrator hints at the inventedness of the djinn story by referring to Gillian's lectures that compare life to a narrative consisting of both unreal and factual happenings:

> She was accustomed also to say, in lectures, that it was possible that the human need to tell tales about things that were unreal originated in dreams, and that memory had certain things also in common with dreams; it rearranged, it made clear, simple narratives, certainly it invented as well as recalling. Hobbes, she told her students, had described imagination as decayed memory. She had at no point the idea that she might 'wake up' from the presence of the djinn and find him gone as he had never been. . . (203)

In her lecture, the narratologist acknowledges the human need to tell stories that would allow one to feel "the possible leap of freedom – I can have what I want" just like the characters whose wishes are granted in fairy tales (254). Feeling old, redundant, and unattractive after her husband's affair with a younger woman, Gillian does not question the presence of the djinn whom she needs to forget her solitude in her hotel room. "Real-unreal [is] not the point," as Gillian says, and what is important is that fantasy provides a remedy for the narratologist to overcome her insecurities as she becomes the heroine of a story that brings her love, sex, and youth (164). Whether "invented" or "recalled," the djinn gives Gillian the chance to be a beautiful magical figure, a peri, by pronouncing her name as "Djil-yan Peri-han" (209).

Overall, Byatt's novella depicts Istanbul in light of the Arabian Nights stories with the themes of magic and wish fulfillment by privileging Gillian's djinn fantasies in the Pera Palas over the city's complexities, such as pollution and income inequalities, which lie outside of her hotel room in 1991. In associating Istanbul with a supernatural being depicted in the Koran and in Persian-Arabian stories, Gillian renders the city that brings Asia and Europe together as being completely distant from Western cultures and civilizations. The djinn, the one that grants Gillian's wishes for youth and love, however, enables a critique of fairy tales through which female readers internalize the myth that they will find romance only if they are desirable in the male gaze. The text evokes fairy tale conventions to show how beauty standards in "once upon a time" stories do not simply exist in a distant imaginary world but negatively affect late twentieth-century British women like Gillian, who are self-conscious over their physical appearances. Unlike the djinns in the Camaralzaman and Budoor story that miraculously bring the two beauties together in bed, the Oriental daemon that comes to life in Istanbul does not grant a happy-ever-after love to Gillian but helps her overcome her insecurities as an aging woman by granting her spiritual youth and self-confidence to feel beautiful. In compensating for her insecurities, Gillian's fantasies of conversing with the djinn serve as a critique of British society where women are judged on the basis of their youth and attractiveness and not of their intelligence and academic success.

Catalina Florina Florescu

Who Is *Not* Sylvia?

A Character Analysis of Stevie from Edward Albee's *The Goat, or, Who Is Sylvia?*

Edward Albee's tri-titled play *The Goat, or, Who Is Sylvia? (Notes toward a Definition of Tragedy),* winner of the 2002 Tony Award for Best Play, is a theatrical gem packed with the birthday motif, the theme of arrival (in this case represented by a denouncing letter), the challenging of the great "old times" motif with their great "old promises of happiness and fulfillment." In this play the author questions the "old" fundamentals of civilization, according to which people could coexist with one another, provided they knew how to masterfully hide their ugly deeds. In return, although in a very shocking manner, the American playwright recommends we start reconsidering or rewriting the way we conceive of our lives so that it may be more flexible to our inflexible human nature. Therefore, Sylvia is everybody's *goat*, a metaphorical gate which our wildest desires may penetrate, potentially dissolving, or at least diminishing, the ravaging effects of our gregarious, unhealthy regimented selves.

– To John, my love

Edward Albee's play *The Goat, or, Who Is Sylvia?* is a theatrical gem packed with the birthday motif, the theme of arrival, and the challenging of the motif of the great "old times" with their great "old promises of happiness and fulfillment." Stevie, the female protagonist, is an emblematic contemporary character. She has been Martin's wife for three decades. She buys unusual flowers and other items because she likes the taste and smell of the ignored or marginalized other. It is the amount of violence in her that shocks us, although for Stevie her final revengeful act is justified and cathartic. Confronted with a bizarre extramarital affair that her husband is conducting – he has been secretly making love to a goat (Sylvia) – Stevie's response grows gradually and steadily. In only twenty-four hours, she experiences the whole rampaging spectrum of rage: disbelief and irritability at the discovery of this terrible news, disgust, outrage, uncontrolled fury, and, finally, the violent act of killing the goat.

Through minute character analysis, this essay invites readers to consider the limits of monogamy and devastating routine. We must reflect on the following

series of thought-provoking questions: whom exactly does Stevie *kill* and what is the cost? Her marriage? Her immature belief in unaltered long-term relationships? Her illusion that, if one knows and respects the way the game is played, one can successfully avoid being betrayed? Her civilized approaches to life's unpredictable moments? Her old image of a good wife and a respectful woman? Her empty expectations of filling out her life with unusual objects that distance her from reality?

Whatever the answer may be, should a clear one ever be unveiled, this play questions the "old" fundamentals of civilization, according to which people could coexist with one another, provided they knew how to masterfully hide their ugly deeds. Although in a very shocking manner, the American playwright recommends in return that we start reconsidering or rewriting the way we conceive of our lives in order to make it more flexible to our inflexible human nature. Therefore, Sylvia is everybody's *goat*, ready to unleash our wildest desires, potentially dissolving, or, at least, diminishing the ravaging effects of our gregarious, unhealthy regimented selves.

1 Desire: The Goat

At the beginning of the play, there is a clear sense of unity between Martin and his long-term wife, Stevie; the dialogue addresses the marital history of a husband and his wife who can finish off each other's thoughts, as if matching feelings, like other couples match their wardrobe on occasion. According to Antonio R. Damasio, "Feelings let us mind the body. . . . Feelings offer us a glimpse of what goes in our flesh."[1]

> MARTIN What's the matter with me?
> STEVIE You're fifty.
> MARTIN No, more than that.
> STEVIE The old foreboding? The sense that everything going right is a sure sign that everything is going wrong, of all the awful to come? All that?[2]

They have been married and have shared the good and the bad for a long time and are aware that, after a certain age, there is nothing else to do but accept the unavoidable decline of old age. Still, they are not bothered by that since it is part of what is called life. They are here and now for each other, and this is much more reassuring than anything else.

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1. Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1994), p. 159.
2. Edward Albee, *The Goat, or, Who Is Sylvia? (Notes toward a Definition of Tragedy)* (New York: Dramatist's Play Service, 2003), pp. 6–7.

When Stevie enters the door, she has a bouquet of ranunculi, which she describes as "secretive" and "too subtle for your [Martin's] forgetful nose."[3] Intuitively, Stevie marches in the right direction, guided by her sensitive sense of smell. Then Martin reaches into his pocket to find two business cards, which he reads aloud: " 'Basic Services, Limited.' . . . Limited to what? (the other card.) 'Clarissa Atherton' (Shrugs)."[4] Stevie inquires about the identity of this woman, but Martin seems to be in a forgetful mood, since he cannot recollect who she is and what type of products are offered by "Basic Services, Limited." Stevie does not seem to be concerned, and adds teasingly: "It does not matter, sweetie. If you're seeing this Atherton woman . . . who smells funny."[5]

She has detected a weird, lingering smell on her husband's clothes (and in her house), and intuits an affair, but is not yet prepared to have her suspicions confirmed. In *Felt Sense: Writing with the Body* (2004), Sandra Pearl argues that, following Michael Polanyi's concept of "tacit knowledge," we develop a keen bodily awareness or the "felt sense." This "[c]omes to us as other bodily processes come – the way sleep comes, or emotions come, or tears come – as we make room for the body to express itself."[6] In other words, in this particular case, along with the verbal exchange between Martin and Stevie, a strange stench lies suspended, yet flagrant.

Of all the five senses, smell is, without a doubt, the most potent; it penetrates our nostrils and, thus, directly – that is, not mediated – enters our bodies. Sight may be enhanced or distracted by an object that interferes with our visual spectrum; touch may be altered by the fabric of our clothes; hearing may be distorted; and taste may be a conflation of sensations (e.g., sweet, sour, and bitter). Smell manages to "insinuate" itself into our lives, whether we want it to or not. This is probably why Stevie keeps controlling the décor, image, and fragrance of her private place by buying rather unusual flowers. She is a woman of subtle, decadent approaches, but, beneath them, of calculated needs. She has observed that her husband does not return home smelling like corn, peaches, or tomatoes after his countryside escapades. His smell has an uncanny dimension.

Finally, a letter confirms her suspicions. But even under these shocking, disturbing, and unsettling circumstances, she appears to be organized, and, frankly, plays her role (the betrayed wife) with an overdose of almost inhuman dignity. The

3. Albee, p. 6.
4. Albee, p. 8.
5. Albee, p. 8.
6. Sondra Pearl, *Felt Sense: Writing with the Body* (Portsmouth: Cook Heinemann, 2004), p. 2.

day she receives the news constitutes an interruption in her otherwise minutely scheduled life.

> STEVIE *[to Martin]* Let's not pretend he [Ross] never wrote you the letter; let's not pretend I didn't get it in the mail today – nice that: no electronic nonsense – and let us not pretend that I did not read it. . . . And let us not pretend that Ross does not tell me that you are having an affair with . . . how does he put it? 'An affair with a certain Sylvia. Who, I am mortified to tell you. . .' He does get flowery, doesn't he![7]

As part of her characterization, Stevie likes special flowers and the slow *ingestion* of each word she hears or reads. Interestingly, when her life has been derailed by an awful disclosure, she has time to quote from the incriminating letter. It is as if she were wearing gloves, or put them quickly on because she did not want to tarnish her image and name. For an irreversible instant, these are *only* Ross's words, and, through some sort of magic or suspension of disbelief, she has escaped the danger they carry.

> STEVIE Stay away from me; stay here. You smell of goat, you smell of shit, you smell of all I cannot imagine being able to smell. Stay *away* from me!
> MARTIN I *love* you!
> STEVIE You *love* me. Let's see if I understand the phrase. You *love* me.
> MARTIN Yes!
> STEVIE But I am a human being; I have only two breasts; I walk upright; I give milk only on special occasions; I use the toilet. . . How can you love me when you love me so much less?[8]

Her last remarks, bitter and ironic, disguise the fact that passion is something as fast as a shooting star, which makes us act foolishly, and, eventually, leaves us dumbfounded and nostalgic. Passion is rooted in the cavities of the flesh, while the acts of remembering, denying, or confronting it belong to the intellect's precipices. Since their marital status and wholeness have been altered, we may suggest that, metaphorically speaking, while Martin experiences the carnal form of the passion, Stevie suffers its consequences. Frighteningly, this *is* a shared experience, except that each partner sinks their teeth into the messy situation from the opposite end!

7. Albee, p. 24.
8. Albee, pp. 24–5.

Stevie must have read the letter alone many times before performing it in front of her husband. This is the reason why she knows when to be highly theatrical and stop, and when to read it flatly, without any. . . passion. She thinks that if she were in front of a real audience, she would have to build up the momentum by transferring to them her feelings of pity, anger, and disgust. Without wanting to, she has become a "goat" herself, as in the prototype of the ancient Greek theater. Stevie is now under the full, ruthless marital spotlight, working on her inflections, gestures, facial contortions, and so on to prove her stubborn refusal to offer the same *old* repertoire to her husband; instead, she surprises him with theatricality or the new quality of her personality. As Morris Berman explains, "Central to Jungian psychology is the concept of 'individuation,' the process whereby a person discovers and evolves his self, as opposed to his ego. The ego is a persona. . . . our understanding of ourselves through the eyes of others. The self, on the other hand, is the true center, our awareness of ourselves without outside interference."[9] Interestingly, Stevie's persona and self are interchangeable; few details are provided about this woman because the rhythm of the plot requires sharp, rapid scenes. There is, literally, no time to spare for in-depth, laborious descriptions of events, reactions, and characters.

When she reads the letter, and stops every now and then, the manufactured, impromptu theatrical illusion keeps her temporarily out of danger, as she casually interprets a script received in the mail. Before performing it to others, she *must* dig underneath each word's context, just as, comparatively, directors do with their actors in tiring rehearsals. Furthermore, the information that she has just got is mediated by two absentees: Ross, the one who wrote the epistle, and Sylvia, Martin's mistress. Their absence turns out to be productive for a woman like Stevie, who is bright enough to seize the opportunity, and make this a profitable, winning argument for herself. With these two absent, she is at liberty to perform the letter in the way *she* wishes; that is, there are no outside voices or interpretations, and, therefore, there is only her exclusive take on the incriminating news. This is a test of her skill as an actress, a chameleon quality of which Martin was not aware, not even intuitively. This is also her test as a director since she wants to produce an *ad-hoc*, reversed *mise en histoire* of how things started, that is, to put them in words, to fix them in these verbal, more or less, equivalents of our internal turmoil. Finally, since she has been betrayed, this represents her chance to interpret a "goat-song," if we consider the literal translation of the Greek word *τραγωδία* (*tragōidia*), from which we have tragedy.

9. Morris Berman, *Reenchantment of the World* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981), p. 78.

The first manifestation of her anger is lexical (a forte on her marital resume), and until she decides how to restore the couple's lost balance, Stevie shows what she is currently *asked* to endure. Words are not similar to carnal passion – irresistible, but nonetheless transient. Words build up a wall in front of our passion because we are prevented from taking action by uttering them, and then thinking about them. Therefore, words make us pause in what we are doing; moreover, "[i]n speaking, the act that the body is performing is never fully understood; the body is the blindspot of speech, that which acts in excess of what is said, but also acts in and through what is said."[10] Stevie is a virtuoso in terms of grammatical and verbal correctness. In the middle of hearing the disturbing details, she does not accept that Martin's use of language has gone astray, too. She wants to hear the bad news in perfect English, which makes us wonder if she is not more concerned about language than about her relationship.

> MARTIN It was a therapy place, a place where people went to. . . talk about it, about what they were doing. . . and with whom.
> STEVIE *What*! Not *whom*! *What*! With *what*![11]

> MARTIN And I was driving out of the town, back to the highway, and I stopped at the top of a hill. . .
> STEVIE Crest.
> MARTIN What!? Who *are* you?
> STEVIE You stopped at the crest of a hill – on it, actually.[12]

If so far Stevie has been preoccupied with maintaining the neat homeostasis of her household (and of her marriage), the cheating episode, in contrast, puts every doubt in motion and implodes their apparently perfect union. She is an acclaimed architect's wife, and the pillars that have been sustaining their relationship had to collapse to reveal the inadequacy of the version of love we call marriage, and, what is worse, its aggravation when probed into – like a dissection – by an affair.

Just as we know little of our mind, what dangers it concocts, or what tricks it plans to play on us, we do not actually know much about Stevie either (for one thing, she is a sophisticated, urbane woman, whose profession is never disclosed, should she have one). Albee creates her in a rather implicit way, by letting us gather piece after piece of information about her personality. She lives in a world of re-

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10. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 11.
11. Albee, p. 32.
12. Albee, p. 38.

spected, socially constructed manners and an established status quo, both of which she has been working hard to bring to her vision of perfection.

> STEVIE I was out shopping today – dress gloves, if you want to know. I still wear them – for weddings and things. . . and then to the fish people for shad roe.[13]

When she arrives home at one point, there is a letter waiting for her; her first reaction after reading the name of Martin's mistress, Sylvia, is quite notable: "Oh, God, I thought; at least, it's someone I don't know; at least it's not Ross's first wife."[14] In her attempts to rewind her day, she is maniacally precise about the items she purchased, although they are insignificant right now. As she reads further into the letter, she even starts laughing.

> STEVIE Do you know what I thought after I'd read the letter? . . . Well, I laughed, of course: a grim joke but an awfully funny one. . . . Some things are so awful you have to laugh – and then I listened to myself laughing, and I began to wonder why I *was – laughing*. . . And just like that (snaps her fingers) I stopped; I stopped laughing. I realized – . . . ah, shit! I've fallen off a building and I'm going to die; I'm going to splat on the sidewalk. . . it was awful and absurd, but it wasn't a joke. . . . And so I knew. And next, of course, came believing.[15]

She is face to face with a cruel, post factum cheating dichotomy: step one, knowing, followed by step two, believing. As we move deeper into the layers of this affair, we find Stevie inquiring about the choice of name of Martin's pleasurable *object* Sylvia, and that presents us with yet another level of her personality, sarcasm and erudition.

> STEVIE Why do you call her Sylvia, by the way? Did she have a tag, or something? Or, was it more: Who is Sylvia, Fair is she that all your goats commend her.[16]

The lines allude to William Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. As Luis Fernando Midence Diaz reminds us,

> The song represents Proteus's failed attempt to gain Silvia's affection over that of her banished Valentine. It is also a clear betrayal of his friendship to

13. Albee, p. 26.
14. Albee, p. 27.
15. Albee, p. 28.
16. Albee, p. 31.

> Valentine, for Proteus has sworn he will give Silvia all of Valentine's letters during his time in exile. In *The Goat*, Stevie's inquiry . . . makes reference to Proteus's song, suggesting both a wooing and a betrayal. The wooing is denoted by Martin's sexual relationships with Sylvia, while Stevie's perception of having been demoted to be loved as much as an animal stands for her betrayal.[17]

However, Sylvia is and will remain offstage throughout the play. This empowers Stevie to take the action into her own hands, and decide where to direct her lamentations and/or self-pride. All of a sudden, she finds herself tuning an unmelodic "goat-song" that has landed undesired on her lap. "The essence of theatre," Peter Brook writes, "is within a mystery called 'the present moment.' 'The present moment' is astonishing. Like the fragment broken off a hologram, its transparency is deceptive. When this atom of time is split open, the whole of the universe is contained within its infinite smallness."[18] For the time being, we leave Stevie to mentally split open her husband's trespassing in order to clarify the direction of their now officially broken marriage (which she feels morally obliged to mend).

2 Rejection: Who Is Sylvia?

Earlier during their confrontation, Stevie had asked Martin if he loved her. To his affirmative answer, she produces her indignation: how could he love her if she has so little to offer him? When we revisit this passage, we might perchance imagine an operating theatre, and envision love bleeding on the table, since one of its ribs has been violently disjointed from the rest. Stevie and Martin approach love like two surgeons who *have* to be as precise as possible when cutting, when removing the affected and foul-smelling tissues, and then sealing everything back together into a healthy whole. However, this risky "open love surgery" reveals that "speech is already a separation. . . . There is no privileged self-knowledge, and other people are no more closed systems than I am myself."[19]

Thus, Martin indirectly provokes Stevie to resuscitate her erotic desires, which she has forgotten while occupied with beautifying her house. Stevie is in a

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17. Luis Fernando Midence Diaz, *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia? A Performance at Miami University* (MA Thesis, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, 2007), pp. 14–15. Via *OhioLINK*.

18. Peter Brook, *The Open Door: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre* (New York: Parthenon Books, 1993), p. 97.

19. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Collin Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 393.

place where her pleasures are less erotic and more casual, like buying ranunculi, shad roe, and dress gloves. Over the years, she has refined her protocol of accumulating goods, thus proving that "[e]very day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction."[20] One may wonder what Martin's purpose in her life is, and how she makes him daily visible to herself. Does she treat him like an object that has been in her household's *collection* for more than three decades, an antique of sorts? No answers are even adumbrated by Albee. One hint of an imbalanced state of urban affairs might be alluded to, though, when Martin is, ironically, head over *hills* (!) in love with the landscape he discovers outside the city. His temporary sexual rejection of Stevie may be correlated with his nausea for urban monotony, cacophony, and secluded *joie de vivre*. He has been involved in the urban landscape all his professional life. Not only that, but also, as Ross reminds us, he "[b]ecame the youngest person ever to win the Pritzker Prize, architecture's version of the Nobel." In addition to his latest achievement, he has recently been "[c]hosen to design the World City, the two hundred billion dollar dream city of the future."[21]

"Translated into everyday life . . . disenchantment," for Berman, means that "jobs are stupefying, relationships vapid and transient, the arena of politics absurd. In the vacuum created by the collapse of traditional values, we have . . . a general retreat into the oblivion provided by drugs, TV, and tranquilizers. We also have a desperate search for therapy."[22] In the middle of his affair, Martin submits to therapy sessions because he wants to find out what attracts *others* to commit adultery, since, he implies, we are an adulterous species. Sooner or later we cheat at least once at a "game" of life. During the therapy sessions, he meets severely traumatized and abused people, whose return to life means zero tolerance toward lies and prefabricated, non-applicable serial social ethics.

> MARTIN It was a therapy place, a place people went to . . . talk about it, about what they were doing . . . and with whom. . . . And most of them had a problem, had a long history. The man with the pig was a farmboy, and he and his brothers, when they were kids, just. . . *did* it. . . *naturally*. . . . The lady with the German Shepherd. . . it turned out she had been raped by her father *and* her brother when she was twelve, or so. . . continually raped, one watching the other, she told us. . . The man with the goose was. . . hideously ugly – I could barely

20. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), p. 225.

21. Albee, p. 13.

22. Berman, p. 17.

> look at him – and I suppose he thought he could never – *you* know. . .[23]

Love, as an abstract concept, as well as a universally binding force, has thus been blown up into microscopic bits. We have perhaps "killed" love because we transformed it into a commodity that we all must have *rapid* access to, and which, in return, should require minimal emotional efforts from us. We have turned love into a product; there are several material ways to "indicate" our love: fluffy bears, heart-shaped chocolate candy, pre-arranged "romantic dates/dinners," jewelry, gift certificates, all void signifiers for an excessively employed word. What cannot be avoided, though, is that love, like old age, faces its own collapse.

Even though Stevie must have analyzed the connotations of love from all existing angles, nothing can possibly allay her distress, as she tries desperately to erase the fatidic day from her memory and marital history.

> STEVIE I want the whole day to rewind – start over. I want the reel to reverse: to see the mail on the hall table where Billy [her son] has left it, then *not* see it because I haven't opened the door yet – not having gotten the fish yet because I haven't left the house yet because I haven't gotten out of our bed yet because I haven't *waked* UP YET. But. . . since I can't reverse time. . . Yes, I *do* want to know. I'm reeling with it. Make me not *believe* it![24]

In the rejection module, she is fully awake, not on stage as an actress any longer, but behind the curtains, covered in embarrassment, since Martin has tailored her a frivolous, see-through (fishnet stocking) costume. She experiences contradictory, mixed reactions. She does not want to believe what is going on because she relies on the shield of lies that we have created to somehow protect us from too tough and/or unbearable moments of life. We have developed these existential props to keep us up when we are feeling down. "Make me not believe it" may be also read as a compound form, that is, "to be" and "to live," as long as we cannot escape going through passages of intractable pain to validate their irritating, *insomniac* presence.

If Stevie was resourceful in avoiding confrontation before, now she feels cornered by the factual rejection, and must find out why it happened. By doing so, she opens the perverse series of *why's* that never truly have answers, but are nonetheless summoned up when we are in despair – literally disjointed from a former version of ourselves: Why do I have cancer, doctor? Why did my only child die? Why is

23. Albee, pp. 34–5.
24. Albee, pp. 29–30.

there little comfort to pain? Why have I been betrayed? Why is there no medicine for broken, smashed-into-pieces feelings/states of mind? Why did a series of bombs erase the physiognomy of my native town? Why? Why? Why? If we linger enough on the last sound, there is one final aural moment: why-y-y morphs itself airborne into "I," and we are thus back into the loop where the first personal pronoun reigns supreme. According to Pearl, "[w]hen we contract or enter a [blank zone] we enter . . . 'the murky zone.' We often experience being in this zone as uncomfortable. We are in a place of not knowing, a place of confusion or emptiness which can feel overwhelming."[25]

As soon as Stevie breaks free from her series of *why's* and their murky zone, she acknowledges that we make use of sex to experience pleasure, just as we use our legs to move, our arms to hold an object, our eyes to see, and so on. All these are bodily tools through which we obtain what we want most of the time. Regardless of this astonishing revelation, she remains confused about what "belonging" is. To whom or what do we belong: To ourselves? To others? To God? To nature? To society? From a material point of view, we are part of nature, as, one day, we will be "recycled"; relationally, to others; spiritually, to any manifestations of God; collectively, to society; and intimately, *probably*, to ourselves. There is too much chaos and pressure which lead us to simultaneous, exhausting movements that have different vectors. Perhaps by belonging to so many, we spread ourselves too thin, too soon.

3 Revenge: Notes toward a Definition of Tragedy

In trying to cope with the awful and absurd news, Stevie explains to Martin that she has been somehow waiting for something to disturb their rather peaceful marital balance, for a moment that she refers to as a "jolt" and, at other times, as a "lessening":

> STEVIE We all prepare for jolts along the way, disturbances of the peace, the lies, the evasions, the infidelities. . . . We prepare for. . . things, for lessening, even; inevitable. . . lessening, and we think we can handle anything, whatever comes along, but we don't know, *do* we! Something can happen that's outside the rules. . . . Death before you're ready to even think about it – that's part of the game. A stroke that leaves you sitting looking at an eggplant, the week before had been your husband – that's another. Emotional disengagement, gradual, so gradual you don't know it's happening, or sudden – that's another. You've read about spouses – God! I hate that word! – 'spouses' who all of a sudden start

25. Pearl, p. 54.

> wearing dresses – yours, or their own collection – wives gone dyke. . . but if there's one thing you don't put on your plate. . . is bestiality. . . . The fucking of animals! No, that's one thing you haven't thought about, one thing you've overlooked as a byway on the road of life, as the old soap has it.[26]

The passage portrays a sharp and mature Stevie, who has her lucid epiphany, when she admits publicly the destructive and/or misleading nature of the unconscious desires that lurk lewdly in the folding of our intertwined triad of *sum–cogito–sentio* (Latin for "I am–I think–I feel"). When we were children and wanted "the world" for ourselves, our parents' warning came immediately; they taught us manners by introducing into our vocabularies two words that guide our adult life: 'greed' and 'selfishness.' On the other hand, when as adults, we want to collect or possess many things, there is no one to whisper to us a reminder about morals (since, like Martin, we tend to forget the demarcation between 'good' and 'bad' when we are obsessed with our needs). As grown-ups, we depend on our individual system for justifying what we like or want and, whether or not that makes any sense whatsoever, it does not seem to revolt us. An affair may be our contemporary understanding of a quixotic adventure: we all know, *theoretically*, this is not something we should do, but we somehow manage to fall into its steep trap.

By the end of the play, just like her famous violent counterpart, Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, Stevie has her hands stained with blood. But, unlike her theatrical violent predecessor, Stevie is aware of the (apparent) purpose of her crime and equally fascinated and satisfied with what she did. Unwilling to think in advance about the consequences of her next act, Stevie believes that, by killing Sylvia, she will end her husband's unorthodox affair, and that is what really matters to her. The last part of the play finds Stevie in her vengeful state of being, where she needs to do justice for and by herself.

> STEVIE *[To Martin]* We are both too bright for most of the shit. We see the deep and awful humor of things go over the heads of most people. . . . Fall out of love with me? Fine! But tell me you love me and an animal – both of us! – equally? The same way? . . . That you can do these things and not understand how it. . . SHATTERS THE GLASS? How it cannot be dealt with – how stop and forgiveness have nothing to do with it? . . . You have brought me down to *nothing*! . . . and, Christ!, I'll bring you down with me![27]

26. Albee, pp. 28–9.
27. Albee, pp. 43–4.

This represents her climactic moment, when she is not scared of the implications of the verb 'to believe,' like before. She has laughed, refused to accept the news and tried everything to avoid the ugly truth. But now she has reached the stage when what happened would not be erased or reversed up to its inception point, and, then, magically rerouted. She feels reduced to nothing, so she tries to figure out how one should act when one is nothing. Stevie remembers that, at some point during Martin's confession, she broke china from her invaluable collection. Without being able to anticipate the imminent irony, she pleasurably reduced those precious and expensive artifacts to nothing. She deflected her anger on objects that could not reciprocate her gesture. Stevie is a mature Alice who does not find Wonderland, but instead enters through a broken, shattered glass, where illusions are destructive, spouses cross lines vulgarly, and the hypocrisy of love is, at last, unmasked.

Now Stevie begs us to look at her and notice the nothingness that lies beneath all human aspects and relations. But her point of view is not nihilistic. Her discovery has *nothing* to do with a premeditated *cancellation* of who we are, but is, on the contrary, an embrace of the mysterious digit zero that separates being from non-being, ruptures from flows, sensuality from norms, desires from concepts, and being-in-the-body from embodying-a-status-quo. Only when she is zero and journeys carelessly through the shattered glass, does she accept herself as a mature woman, where love itself has become nothingness.

As Peggy Phelan argues poetically,

> *Once upon a time*, words were magnificent laborers. . . . Much to everyone's surprise it seemed that the more we asked words to do, the more extraordinary and expansive they became. . . . Then one day, a terrible accident occurred. No one really knows what caused it. But suddenly words *sank* like stones. . . . [Words] *were sick of everyone believing so much in them.* It was hard to be the object of faith, trust, love, for so many people. *The words had been asked to carry everyone's history and dreams*. The words fell apart, split, in the users' bodies. As the words cleaved into obstinate fragments, the users' bodies became scattered, nervous, symptomatic. The breaking words broke the people's bodies.[28]

Thus, words have passed through a broken surface, too, where – among other relics – they met Stevie's conjugal annulment. Her violent act is of a fascinating quality because it can be interpreted as the symbolic "killing" of our inhibitions,

28. Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 6–7 (my emphasis).

lies, unfulfilled promises and irrational standards of living. Lady Macbeth kills along with her husband, and, thus, they become partners in crime. Stevie kills *because* of her husband. Therefore, the crimes lead to opposite conclusions and messages. Lady Macbeth discovers the loneliness and futility of what has remained from her life. Eventually she goes insane, as a punishment for her crime, and starts seeing an indelible bloodstain that she will try desperately to wash off. Put differently, she lives in times when a crime, a misdemeanor had to be atoned for. Stevie, on the other hand, writes the last scene in her husband's episode of infidelity and, along with it, concludes the phase of their adult, monotonous marriage. Whatever comes next in their lives could be *either* good *or* bad, constructive/destructive, moral/immoral, together/separate, as they belong to an "alternative generation," constantly too tired and somewhat indifferent to the choice.

> STEVIE *[To Martin]* Why are you surprised? [She just killed Sylvia] What did you expect me to do? . . . She loved you. . . you say. As much as *I* do.[29]

Stevie eliminates Sylvia because she cannot accept a "jolt" between herself and her husband. To Sue E. Cataldi,

> Phenomenologically, as we are being emotionally dis-positioned or displaced (de-bordered and re-bordering), we feel the danger as well as the fear, the loss together with our grief. . . . What we cannot experience or sense is where, *precisely*, these 'cross overs' take place – 'where' the loss 'becomes' my grief, for instance, or 'where' his anger has intermingled and crossed over into my feelings of fear toward it. But this is just the 'occluding edge' of the chiasm, the 'blind spot' at work. There is still the Flesh of the world between us.[30]

We cannot experience a complete empathy with another, since we are not in the other's body and mind. There is a much needed breathing space between us. From a theatrical point of view, there are no villains in this play, because the message is quite blunt: if we dare to blame anyone/anything for an injustice we have suffered, we implicitly blame ourselves, too. Even though there is a "Flesh of the world between us," there are nonetheless "currents" of guilt we must assume to-

29. Albee, p. 55.

30. Sue E. Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth and Flesh: A Study of Sensitive Space. Reflections upon Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Embodiment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p 115.

gether. Stevie thinks she is partly at fault for what has happened to Martin. *But* she refuses to live with him *and* vicariously add his pleasurable object to her collection.

In commenting on Arthur Rimbaud's famous, "One evening, I sat Beauty on my knees; and I found her bitter, and I abused her,"[31] Arthur C. Danto remarks that "[t]he abuse of beauty is the symbolic enactment of an offense against morality and, hence, in effect against humanity."[32] If love equals beauty, then Stevie must destroy its fake innocent look. She lives in a period where we dream that everything is pain-free, where solutions must be found instantly so that we do not feel uncomfortable in any way. Our inhibitions, taboos, and spiritual hierarchies are signatures of a remote, inactive past. What is then left for us to taste, experience, and indulge in? We have elaborated an intricate, self-attacking system of beliefs according to which, regardless of our actions, there will always be a solution, or an analgesic to heal our wounds. This thinking discloses how much we count for ourselves, and how we have consciously surrendered to becoming nothing and no-body.

Put differently, we increase the intensity of our pain verbally. The more we think about it, the more we are in pain because of our neuron assemblies. Does this mental trick work for desires, too? The more we think about them, the more we are obsessed with them? Is the contemporary human mind unleashed? Could we blame science for this state of affairs? As Jane Bennett points out, "Modern science practices first induce the expectation of a telos and then flatly refuse to fulfill it; science first whets our appetite for completion of purpose and then insists that no final satisfaction is attainable."[33]

Stevie is aware, too, of this defect, of this contemporary imperfection, but does not want to go in that direction because then everything will collapse *without* a chance of recovery. The more she uses her intellect to come up with a reasonable excuse and explanation, the more lost she would be. In other words, the more she thinks about this "goat" (a sticky, monosyllabic word), the more she feels disconnected from reality, entangled in a maze-like absorption of life, its residues, erratic norms, collective, media-produced, impersonal desires, and so on and so forth. At the moment, all she wants to fix is *her* shattered conjugal glass.

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31. Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), p. 39.

32. Danto, p. 40.

33. Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), p. 61.

4 *A* Conclusion: Sketches toward What Love May Be

In the title of this essay appears a negation – who is *not* Sylvia? – since I believe Albee's play elicits hard (to admit) truths from all couples. Otherwise, we would be too far away from what this playwright searches for and eventually comes across: the *tamed* and lame animal within us. We learn to follow rules, and, little by little, we get domesticated by them, losing the appetite to try something new. We fear that for doing so we would be judged, mistreated, rejected, or labeled. We are not exactly free if we are afraid, are we? Therefore, to deny what has happened to Martin, Stevie, or both of them as a couple, would imply disregarding what monogamous love is. Why does love become a boring friendship in long-term couples, and why don't we address this danger? Why, over the years, do we stop being thrilled or excited, and why does everything seem like a catastrophic reoccurrence? This *couple*'s Sylvia "[r]eminds us how much we humans are, in Haraway's inspired formulation, a 'companion species.' "[34]

Nonetheless, some critics have noted that this play brings into analysis a dysfunctional couple, but if that were true, then Albee would, indeed, have spoken about a real, and not a metaphorical goat. Undoubtedly, *that* would have been disturbing! There is nothing dysfunctional in this couple unless we consider how deeply they have positioned themselves in cushioned lies that probably created a gap between them long before this disaster. Now they are in a dead-end situation, incapable of reviving their marriage or rekindling their passion. Elizabeth Grosz reminds us that in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,

> Freud [argues] that the organism attempts to keep the quantity of energy or excitation as low as possible. . . . There is an entropic principle internally directing the organism towards simplicity and quiescence, impelling it towards death. Life can be seen, on this Freudian scenario, as the limited deferment or delay of the death drive, a detour of death through the pleasure principle.[35]

Although initially developed to stress the gradual slowing down of our physicality, I contend that, since love is in us, like pollen on flowers, the concept of quietude may be applied to love, too. Our pleasure principles, or what we call love, encounter the lessening of their functions and abilities.

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34. Una Chaudhuri, " 'Of All Nonsensical Things': Performance and Animal Life," *PMLA* 124.2 (2009) 520–525, p. 524.

35. Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 201.

Comparatively, there is an object that resides in us, a half-revealed object of passion, quest, and intrigue (that we tend to ignore). According to Gilles Deleuze, "I *must* have a body, it's a moral necessity. . . . I must have a body because an obscure object lives in me. . . . The mind is obscure, the depths of the mind are dark, and this dark nature is what explains and requires a body."[36] Furthermore, there is a *goat* in each and every one of us. The Aberdeen Bestiary defines it as "an animal [that] chooses, *capere*, to live in rugged places." The goats "[l]ive in high mountains and can tell if men approaching a long way off are hunters or travellers." Finally, "[t]he goat has very sharp eyesight, sees everything, and recognises things from a long way off . . . and picks up good grass from bad grass."[37] In human terms, what is described above is called "instinct"; we know when to ward off danger, and if somehow we miss the warning signs, we have an inborn capacity to welcome disaster as part of our flesh ontology.

On the other hand, love has become insufficient to describe what we want. Yet, this is not exactly tragic. It is the inception of a phase when who we are fails to be defined. What validates us in the digital era is what makes us feel good. Not moral, but good, since our post-post-postmodern human nature indicates an inclination toward Epicureanism and its myriad manifestations. In trying to explain the sort of exalted experience Martin has been having with Sylvia, he says: "It was as if an alien came out of whatever it was, and it. . . took me with it, and it was. . . an ecstasy and a purity, and a. . . love of a. . . un-i-mag-in-able kind, and it relates to nothing *whatever*, to nothing that can be *related* to!"[38]

Stevie *kills* Martin's relation to nothing because, paradoxically, she needs to have a clear "road" on the hills and slopes of a shattered life. She has already intoned the goat-song, mimetically sacrificed the goat, what else remains for her to do? She invites Martin to hide together with her for a while beneath the skin of the goat, now fully aware that we rise and fall sexually like *old* empires. This is why she has now exhausted her D.R.R. marital syndrome, where D stood for desire, R for rejection, and the second R for revenge. Beneath the still warm goatskin, she possesses a novel perspective on love, and ponders what remains after revenge and a series of shocks. Her answer may be "repose," a third R in this imaginary series, because that, too, relates to zero, nothing (and is intimately related to the principle of rest).

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36. Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 85.

37. *The Aberdeen Bestiary*, ed. Michael Arnott, *Historic Collections*, University of Aberdeen Homepage, accessed 4 April 2012 <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/14r.hti>.

38. Albee, p. 39.

Ogaga Okuyade

Narrating Growth in the Nigerian Female *Bildungsroman*

The *Bildungsroman* has been extensively studied in the West, but scholarly works on it in Africa are very few. This could be attributed to the fact that these narratives are sometimes treated as juvenile fiction because of the preponderance of growing-up children in them. I therefore examine how third generation Nigerian female writers subvert and alter the form in an African context to articulate the fact that growth as a universal human experience differs according to contexts and the space where it is negotiated. The paper concentrates mainly on Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, but I shall make passing remarks on Azuah's *Sky-High Flames* and Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*, not specifically for the purpose of intertextuality, but to demonstrate how these novels belong to the same tradition. From the plot structure and analysis of texts it becomes clear that the traditional western *Bildungsroman* has been domesticated within a postcolonial context to appraise narratives of growth. They offer a model of resistance to women's oppression. The Nigerian variant of the *Bildungsroman* articulated in these novels portrays the struggle for individuation and the negotiations of feminine subjectivity, while concurrently depicting the plight of women in a society plagued by the debilitating forces of patriarchy, and alternatives to that plight.

If the prominent Nigerian writers in English in the second half of the twentieth century were males, those of the first decade of the twenty-first century appear to be females. This is not to argue that Nigerian male writers have gone underground, but to indicate that the number of female writers has continued to soar with the passage of time since the 1990s. The most fascinating feature of the narratives this essay deals with is the fact that most of them explore the issue of identity formation. These novels owe this distinction to the innovative, perhaps, rebellious strategies employed by the protagonists to contain the process of re-enacting and sustaining the grand dominant narrative of recircling or reproducing the script constructed for women like most of the mothers who are frustratingly trapped within the confines of domestic spaces. The mothers in these narratives are usually reduced to victims of familial ideology and patriarchal oppression. While the mothers' culturally imposed identity is submerged by the burdens of the mythologies and iconic represen-

The AnaChronisT 16 (Winter 2011): 152–170 ISSN 1219–2589 (print)

tations of women as subservient, self-sacrificing, chaste, and devoted to family, the daughters employ different rebellious strategies to reconstruct their identity and salvage what is left of their mothers. Most importantly, however, the narratives capture the girl-child in the process of *womaning*.

The subject of my essay is not broadly the African novel, but the Nigerian novel of the third generation. Although this generation of novelists continue to attract international acclaim, academic research on their works is still scanty. Apart from numerous reviews and interviews, the first major compilation of academic essays on third-generation Nigerian novelists – to which work Adesanmi and Dunton refer as being "produced by emergent writers who had acquired a creative identity markedly different from that of second generation writers"[1] – appeared in a special issue of *English in Africa* in May 2005, guest edited by Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton. The introductory essay by Adesanmi and Dunton accentuates the observation above when they remark that, "little or no scholarship (had yet been done) on the rapidly expanding body of work,"[2] hence the need to devote an entire issue to it. With their dedication of the issue to the discussion of the writings of the third generation, the editors hoped to "signal the entry of the new writing into the arena of African critical discourse."[3] They defended their choice of theme by stating that it provided

> a timely legitimation of our initial efforts to bring scholarship to bear on this significant body of writing and a recognition of the fact that more scholars have now turned their attention to this significant corpus of new writing.[4]

Encouraged by the success of the special issue of *English in Africa* devoted to the third generation Nigerian novelists, the editors collaborated on a second such issue, but this time the project was published in *Research in African Literatures* three years later. They declared that "the new Nigerian novel does exhibit distinctive features, in terms of scope of characterization, thematic and formal characteristics. . ."[5]

This article, therefore, examines three third generation Nigerian novels, Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Unoma Azuah *Sky High-Flames* and Sefi

1. Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, "Nigeria's Third Generation Writing: Historiography and Preliminary Theoretical Considerations," *English in Africa* 32.1 (2005) 7–19, p. 7.
2. Adesanmi and Dunton, p. 7.
3. Adesanmi and Dunton, p. 7.
4. Adesanmi and Dunton, p. 8.
5. "Introduction: Everything Good is Raining: Provisional Notes on the Nigerian Novel of the Third Generation," *Research in African Literatures* 39.2 (2008) vii–xii.

Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* as *Bildungsroman* and demonstrates how the writers have altered the traditional form of the genre to account for the Nigerian experience. The existential aspects of the novels and the progressive metamorphosis of the characters from ignorance to cognition aptly illustrate that the three novels purposively selected for analysis are *Bildungsromane*, novels of growth and education, and that one of the major determinants of a successful narrative of growth is change.

Ebele Eko identifies the experience of growing up as a major trait in the novels of the third generation of Nigerian novelists; she opines that they are actually describing the "world around them, the events of their growing-up years."[6] Madalaine Hron also argues that the "protagonists of most of these recent Nigerian texts . . . are all children or adolescents."[7] Besides the novels being narratives of growth, they exhibit an autobiographical propensity. One of the peculiarities of the *Bildungsroman*, according to David Miles, is that "there lives in the confessor (protagonist) a painful awareness of change and growth, precisely the awareness that lies at the center of the *Bidungsroman*."[8] Chikwenye Ogunyemi, elaborates further on the traits of a *Bildungsroman* when she suggests that it "educates while narrating the story of another's education. Interestingly therefore, both the hero and the reader benefit from this education."[9]

The study associates the *Bildungsroman* with the growth process of a male character who achieves a harmonious relationship with his social surroundings after a more or less conflictive process of acculturation[10] it is the sort of novel in which the main protagonist develops his personality throughout the narrative in the key life stages from adolescence to maturity. Nadal M. Al-Mousa defines the *Bildungsroman* as a type of novel in which action hinges on the fortunes of an ambitious young hero as he struggles to live up to his poetic goals against the negative forces of prosaic reality. The typical hero in the novels of development is

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6. Ebele Eko, "Nigerian Literature of the 21st Century: New Voices, New Challenges," *Journal of the Annual International Conference on African Literature and English Language* 4 (2006) 43–54, p. 45.

7. Madelaine Hron, "Ora na-azu nwa: The Figure of the Child in Third-Generation Novels," *Research in African Literatures* 39.2 (2008) 27–47, pp. 27–28.

8. D. H. Miles, "The Picaro's Journey to the Confessional: The Changing Image of the Hero in the German *Bildungsroman*," *PMLA* 89 (October 1974), p. 981.

9. O. Chikwenye Ogunyemi, "Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man as a Novel of Growth," *Nigerian Journal of the Humanities* 4 (1980) 5–15, p. 15.

10. Maria Karafilis, "Crossing the Borders of Genre: Revisions of the *Bildungsroman* in Sandra Cisnero's *The House on Mango Street* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 31.2. (1998) 63–78, p. 63.

a male who "grows up in a humble family in the provinces, but, endowed with an adventurous spirit, leaves home to seek his fortune and realize his ambitions."[11]

However, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that the *Bildungsroman* presents to the reader "the image of man in the process of becoming";[12] and situates its protagonist on the threshold between different historical eras. "[The hero] emerges along with the world and he reflects the historical emergences of the world itself."[13]

The essential characteristic of classical *Bildungromane* is the depiction of a young protagonist growing toward the ability to live in society: "The young man must encounter life, and be formed in that encounter."[14] The prototypical example of the form, according to Mitchell's account, is Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, which portrays a young man's progression toward fitting into bourgeois German society. Consequently, at the end of the protagonist's journeys he is eventually reconciled with the society. My intention in this article is therefore to demonstrate that while the protagonists of the purposively selected text, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*[15] and the other two mentioned above possess the major features of the classical *Bildungsroman* protagonist, they do not develop in quite the same way. Adichie's novel shows the protagonist growing apart from society especially her father's standards. As she journeys on, the possibility of her integration into her father's world recedes. This is where the Nigerian variant of the form runs counter to the traditional. I therefore, examine how third generation writers subvert and alter the form in an African context to assert that growth as a universal human experience differs according to contexts and the space where it is negotiated. The paper concentrates mainly on Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, but I shall make passing remarks on Azuah's *Sky-High Flames*[16] and Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*,[17] not specifically for the purpose of intertextuality, but to demonstrate how these novels belong to the same tradition.

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11. Nadal M. Al-Mousa, "The Arabic Bildungsroman: A Generic Appraisal," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25.2 (1993) 223–240, p. 223.

12. M. M. Bakhtin, "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical typology of the Novel)," *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 19.

13. Bakhtin, p. 23.

14. Breon Mitchell, "*A Portrait* and the *Bildungsroman* Tradition," in *Approaches to Joyce's* Portrait*: Ten Essays*, ed. Thomas F. Staley and Bernard Benstock (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), 61–76, p. 62.

15. Chimamanda Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* (Lagos: Farafina, 2004).

16. Unuma Azuah, *Sky-High Flames* (Baltimore: Publishamerica, 2005).

17. Sefi Atta, *Everything Good Will Come* (Lagos: Farafina, 2005).

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* begins in *medias res*, realized through flashback. The novel charts the physical and psychological development of the protagonist, Kambili, and her brother Jaja. Their development designates their struggle to define themselves beyond the stiffened and funless world their fundamentalist father has designed for them. Eugene Achike is a wealthy and sensitive capitalist, but his wealth does not translate into domestic bliss for his children and wife. His wealth obviously becomes a damaging influence on the psyche of his family. The narrative is woven around Palm Sunday, yet the development of the protagonist and her brother is symbolically influenced by the spatial settings of the text – their home in Enugu, school, church and Nsukka. The latter has a transformative effect on their developmental process. Adichie describes her setting with unpretentious fidelity. Kambili's home is very typical of children from the aristocratic class, yet they are empty psychologically. Kambili is thus alienated socially, culturally and psychologically from everyone around her, except her brother. The most fundamental problem associated with this character is her consistent loss of perspective. Kambili is not just divided through the unconscious or alienated by the 'myth of the modern,' the loss of natural self; like most modernist protagonists, Kambili is unable to effortlessly identify with her immediate environment. Thus, she is fragmented most importantly through suppressed emotional sensation and psychological drive and what Mary Lou Emery describes as "eclipsed geo-cultural locations."[18] Kambili's home is wild and grand, but menacing. It lacks almost nothing yet it overwhelms and inundates her psychological development rather than elevating and animating it. In the first couple of pages one can hardly discern that the Achike home is characterized by the fear generated from Eugene's brutishness because the protagonist appears not to want to state that aspect of family life. One could mistake the children's reticence for moral order. The protagonist and her brother behave as if silence were the arid motto, the abiding philosophy of the family.

Kambili's father Eugene is a highly contradictory character. He appears to be very successful, hardworking, devoutly religious and devoted to his family. Within the walls of the home, however, the family knows him differently and, as the novel unfolds, his obsessive religiosity is unmasked as bigotry and violence.

Eugene is a religious bigot, whose beliefs are founded on exaggeratedly strict Catholic observance. His over-zealous attitude and clipped religious tones overpower the other members of his family. On the other hand, he works hard to ensure that his family lacks nothing. His houses are capacious yet stifling, and the bedrooms are very spacious yet stuffy. Kambili's description of the contrast between their commodious

18. Mary Lou Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End": Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 16.

apartment and its airlessness is telling: "Although our spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, I felt suffocated" (7). Coupled with Eugene's overbearing temperament, the suffocating apartment is devoid of life and is isolated. Eugene's brutishness, which has made the apartment unaccommodating will no doubt extinguish any seeming fire of growth ignited in the protagonist:

> The compound walls, topped by coiled electric wires, were so high I could not see the cars driving by on our street. It was early rainy season, and the frangipani trees planted next to the walls already filled the yard with the sickly – sweet scent of their flowers.[19]

Kambili, like the true protagonist of a female *Bildungsroman* exhibits a sense of 'awakening,' which includes the recognition and acceptance of her limitations. If the psychological, cultural and the religio-graphic limitations of Kambili are summed up, what emerges is a deafening silence. Invariably the most important aspect of her transition or rites of passage is the quest for voice. If she is to attain voice, she must transcend and traverse her geographical limitations.

Eugene owns a conglomerate which includes a publishing house reputed for its astuteness and unbiased reportage of the Nigerian political situation and above all its antipathetic posture or stance toward the virulent political temperament of the military regime in Nigeria. He urges his editor, Ade Coker, to ensure that *The Standard* speaks out, yet his wife and children's voices are shriveling by the day because of the air of machismo around the house. Silence in Eugene's home is magnified to the extent that it could be touched. The function of Kambili's tongue is constricted so that her struggle to express herself usually terminates with a stutter, making her classmates observe her with familiarity tinged with contempt. Because of her inability to make her tongue function in school she is labeled a "backyard snob."[20] To aggravate her plight, when the closing bell rings, she dashes off to her father's waiting car without exchanging pleasantries with her classmates before she is chauffeur-driven home. Her classmates interpret this as aristocratic arrogance. They are unaware that her life is dictated and regulated by a schedule imprinted on her psyche. Eugene's sense of production evidences his personality as a capitalist. From time to time, he comes home with new products from his factories to be assessed by his reticent family, which has become so dopey in its pathetic state of taciturnity, created by his phallocentricism. This phallic and capitalist arrogance is extended to Kambili's education. Coupled with the sickening and choking home characterized by her father's sense of material acquisition, her education begins to lack creativity and

19. Adichie, p. 19.
20. Adichie, p. 53.

enchantment. Both her home and school become prisons for her, as she slips down the academic ladder. The kind of educational system Eugene wants for his children is dehumanizing. He is mechanical in all spheres of life, and as such he condemns and discourages all forms of leisure. When Kambili comes second in her class, rather than encouraging her to put more effort into her academic business, he chides her and asks a mechanical question: "How many heads has Chinwe Jideze? – *The girl who beat her to second position*" (Emphasis mine).[21] He goes further and presents a mirror to Kambili to ascertain the number of heads she has, and for fear of being tortured Kambili devises a new method of studying:

> It was like balancing a sack of gravel on my head everyday at school and not being allowed to steady it with my hand. I still saw the print in my textbooks as red blur, still saw my baby brother's spirit strung together by narrow lines of blood. I memorized what the teachers said because I knew my textbooks would not make sense if I tried to study later. After every test, a tough lump like poorly made fufu formed in my throat and stayed there until our exercise books come back.[22]

Eugene's educational standard is unnecessarily strict; it has no room for humanistic development, reminiscent of the school in Dickens' Coke Town, in *Hard Times* where students are to be taught facts and nothing but facts. Little wonder Kambili turns the entire academic enterprise into cramming and calculation. Eugene's educational standards stress the training of the intellect without any complimentary ties with the emotion and imagination. To him human reason is important. The reduction of Kambili's life to facts and figures subjects her to mental torture. As the narrative develops one notices varied forms of silence. Kambili, Jaja and their mother speak with their spirit. Sometimes they converse with their eyes. Kambili's mother hardly talks; when she does, it is in monosyllables. Pauline Ada Uwakweh observes:

> Silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social being, thinking and expression that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or mutual female structure.[23]

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21. Adichie, p. 46.
22. Adichie, p. 52.
23. P. A. Uwakweh, "Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*," *Research in African Literatures* 26.1 (1995) 75–84, p. 75.

In the novel silencing is not only a mechanism or weapon of patriarchal control, but of domestic servitude. The children and their mother devise means of survival within the suffocating space called their home. One of the strategies is the timid silence with which she observes situations and the other is a filial bonding. Through bonding, mother and children are able to survive the domestic quagmire and the prescriptions of the religious zealotry of their father. From all indications, Kambili is almost orphaned though her parents are alive. Her father is too mechanical to help her realize her dreams and her mother too docile to be her role model. She never stands firm enough to protect her children. It becomes obvious that Kambili wishes to escape from the confining patriarchal scripts of her home into a space of "private enjoyment."[24]

Kambili and Jaja's development is impaired by their psychological instability. They are deprived of any outlet for emotional life except for themselves. The constrictions and deprivations of Eugene's religious philosophy strengthen the bond even more, because when confronted with any form of adversity, they look inwards. Their homes at Enugu and Aba become a fortress for them and at the same time a symbol of vitiation. Both spaces become the site where they shield the realities of their condition and pretend all is well. Thus the homes of others, especially their well-wishers who admire them from a distance, are a symbol of familial bliss and contentment, but for the Achikes "home" provides a cover. While others envy them, they remain overwhelmed by the domineering force of their home. Even within this circumscribed space, Kambili continues her quest to find her voice through eavesdropping. She tries to make sense of her father's conversation with his guests whenever they call. The journey towards the retrieval of her voice begins with what would have been the normal ritual of silence during the Christmas celebration if her aunt Ifeoma had not shown up with her family. The conservative mindset of their father makes them regard anything that he labels 'evil' as abominable to them without any rational or dialectical questioning. Though a Catholic like Kambili's father, aunt Ifeoma initiates the process of Kambili's liberation.

The character of Ifeoma has a threefold effect on Kambili. She is first of all the maternal figure who offers guidance to Kambili. She helps Kambili distinguish between right and wrong through her religious faith, and she helps her find her rhythm and balance in a society that is unbalanced by the asymmetric gender configuration. Second, Kambili sees her as a woman who is self-reliant in a male-dominated society. Third, she has the ability to father and mother her children. She plays these roles so well that her children hardly miss their dead father. Through

24. G. Sanborn, "Keeping Her Distance: Cisneros, Dickenson and the Politics of Private Enjoyment," *PLMA* 116(5) (2001) 1334–1348, p. 1334.

this character, Kambili begins her initiation into womanhood. It is in her house that Kambili learns the tricky domestic business of cooking. Like Enitan in Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*, Kambili never has the privilege of assessing the culinary site. The kitchen becomes the space where women nurture themselves and others. Kambili retrieves her voice in this marginal space. She is initiated into womanhood in the kitchen; the rites begin with learning to prepare some local delicacies. Madelaine Hron substantiates this position when she writes that:

> It is only when Kambili herself learns to cook and prepare traditional Igbo dishes that she breaks away from the fabricated sweetness of her childhood and gains agency as a woman. At first Kambili does not even know how to handle a yam (134); Aunt Ifeoma must show her how to soak her hands in water and slide the skin off (165). Kambili's hand-soaking initiation in Ifeoma's kitchen thus contrasts starkly with that of Eugene, whose behaviour was conditioned by a missionary's basin of scalding water. Moreover, Kambili's entry into language, her first voiced rebuttal in Nsukka (176), also concerns food preparation; she demands to learn how prepare *orah* soup [sic].[25]

The kitchen becomes the site of Kambili's redemption because it is the locale where women must become what they must be and learn the art of feminine expression and take total control of their existence.

"Things actually started to fall apart,"[26] when Kambili embarked on the trip to Nsukka. On arrival at Nsukka, Kambili is stunned by the polarity between the frolicking temperament that pervades the cramped apartment there and their forlorn existence even in the midst of everything that should make life luxurious. Kambili becomes confused by the untrammeled grace with which everybody carries themselves in the house. Her inability to comprehend this disposition makes her dissolve even further into silence.

For Kambili, Nsukka does not only represent a town where her aunt lives, but acts as a symbol of liberty, as the concluding chapter evidences. Her teenage development becomes complete in this town because for the very first time her mouth performs almost all the functions associated with it. She smiles, talks, cries, laughs, jokes and sings. Through Ifeoma, Kambili discovers her grandfather Papa Nnukwu's sense of pantheism, as she watches him from a distance commune with his [G]ods – an occasion which proves the old man a better believer, who understands the intricate geometry of religion, most especially, the relationship between [G]ods and

25. Hron, p. 34.
26. Adichie, p. 1.

man, thereby disproving and debunking her father's stony fundamentalism. For the very first time she lives a life that is not dictated by a schedule, though the items in the schedule are engraved in her heart, Ifeoma consigns her nephew's and niece's schedules and customizes them to her world – a world characterized by the application of the commonest of senses.

As she develops psychologically under the tutelage of Father Amadi, she commits a cardinal sin, through a Freudian slip. Midway through her journey or apprenticeship she falls in love with the priest. At this point she does not know the implications and consequences of this psychic emotional drive. Father Amadi is perhaps the only man outside her family circle who has been so close to her. As she matures physically and mentally, her emotion builds up as well, reaching its climax with her sensational pronouncement of her love for the priest. This invariably becomes a vibrant statement of her first access to freedom of speech.

Eugene notices remarkable changes in his children as they settle down after their journey to Nsukka. One such change is Jaja's modest but unprecedented demand for the key to his room. Eugene is astounded by this demand and decides to take pragmatic and overt steps to ensure that his children return to his doctrinaire standards. This leads to a cleansing ritual, which will purge and purify Jaja and Kambili of the sinful dust of Nsukka and the pagan temperament of the air of Ifeoma's home. Eugene bathes Kambili's feet in hot water, completely disregarding her screams of pain. The ritual yields a less than proportionate return because it fails to produce the elutriating effects Eugene desires. The children have brought two items from their aunt's; Jaja brings seeds of purple hibiscus while Kambili brings the uncompleted painting of their grandfather. Both items represent freedom from the rigid and despairing lifestyle of their father's world, and enable them to sustain a steady link with their aunt's airy world en route for liberation. With these prized possessions they hope never to plunge within the confines of frustration, disillusionment, alienation, and the existential solitude of the world they know too well. The items will help them fill the vacuum created in their lives. Her father suddenly discovers Kambili's painting as she and her brother are admiring their grandfather. Like the extremist that he is, Eugene takes the painting from his children, who both claim ownership of it at the same time. Stunned by this development, Eugene destroys the painting, and Kambili is unable to restrain herself. She is not ready to watch her father tear something she holds sacred from her just like that, although she has remained silent all her life. However, since she has retrieved her voice, she is unwilling to observe her father truncate the stable transition of her development, which the painting will help her realize even within the circumscribed radius of her father's walls. If the painting for Kambili symbolizes freedom and at the same time the remains of her grandfather, with whom she never connected

while he was alive, it represents something ugly for Eugene and it must be destroyed. For him it represents a connection to a past which is now a threat to his empire. She begins to reassemble the pieces of painting with alacrity and observes her father with a defiant air, an unequivocal expression of rejection, condemnation and disintegration of the unproductive upbringing that her father had given her. The furtiveness with which she handles the painting embarrasses everything her father stands for. He is stunned by the confutation of his conservative religious standards – an occasion where he is completely subdued by the first shocking evidence of the result of his rigid religious matrix; Kambili's handling of the pieces of the painting symbolizes the collapse of her father's system. Rather than realize and admit that his philosophy is inhuman and inefficacious, with a doleful expression on his face he degenerates into an uncontrollable fit of anger and slaps Kambili into a state of unconsciousness. The trip to Nsukka initiates a domino effect in the developmental process of Kambili and Jaja.

Through this incident Kambili succeeds in breaking out of the social and religious silence of her earlier life. She declines to acquiesce to the status quo – escaping from her entrapment, by debunking her father's authority, a definitive statement of rebellion against the phallocentric and autocratic set-up.

At the concluding chapter, she plays Fela tapes without any form of fear of contravening standards. She issues cheques to people as her will moves her. Fela is a symbol of freedom of speech, fair play and justice. While alive, his bohemian lifestyle marked him out whenever he was on stage performing. He was the Afrobeat maestro who used his music to resist and contest several Nigerian governments for their oppressive and corrupt tendencies. To the government, Fela was a marksman whose musical shots were always on target – he spoke to the pains of the people and lashed out at the government for their moral depravity. Before his death, he suffered numerous incarcerations, but each time he returned and continued his battles with the government; nothing ever deterred him from speaking out. When Kambili visits her aunt on the first occasion, the kind of tapes Amaka played are abominable to Kambili. Since she is now free not because of her father's death, but because she has reached the pinnacle of her development, she can easily differentiate between good and bad. She does not need to be goaded to make decisions. Kambili discovers her selfhood as she evolves from what she has learnt at Nsukka and puts to use that knowledge to build her own worth. Ifeoma creates the avenue for Kambili to stimulate her self-worth. The reader can now begin to follow the growth of Kambili as she moves forward with her internal epiphanic awakening and watch her as she learns to be a mature woman, an aspect of the female *Bildungsroman*. The narrative centers around a quest Kambili embarks upon for the restoration of her dignity, encapsulated in the act of voicing. She discovers herself at Nsukka and coincidentally, the

motto of the University of Nigeria Nsukka[27] is: *To Restore the Dignity of Man*. The entire narrative is tightly woven around this motto, which endows the novel with a structural balance between content and form.

In Unoma Azuah's *Sky-High Flames*, she gives an account of the childhood of Ofunne, the main character of the novel. In the first chapters, Azuah paints an extremely vivid picture of childhood in a rural setting. The reader is able to enter Ofunne's mind and see the world through the eyes of a child. The novel begins with a startling announcement of the exigent and exacting responsibilities of occupying the privileged position of the eldest child of the home in a rural African society:

> I was almost driven to hate my parents. My father never approved of anything I did. He felt he knew what was best for me, and my mother picked on me like a bird with a sharp beak. As the first daughter, I've always had to cater to [sic] everyone's needs but any minute spent by myself was called daydreaming.[28]

From a very tender age Ofunne's destiny has been decided. She is to remain docile and inactive in the culinary site where her parents continue to keep her in a supine position. Her upbringing is strictly domestic, in order that she should fit the office of a chattel or become the object of the evening amusement of some man in the future. Her parents would do anything to ensure that the course to her destiny is not truncated. She becomes entrapped at a very tender age. Although her parents' plans for her to become a fulfilled woman are a recipe for her disaster, she psychologically maps out strategies for her liberation from the imposed state of inertia that her parents intend to plunge her into. The path to freedom from her entrapment is education. According to F. M. L. Thompson, "an education was a passport to respectability and a necessary ticket for entry to many trades."[29] Hazel Carby amplifies Thompson's position on the importance of education, Carby strongly believes that the education of females will prompt social changes and move women into a different sphere where they are no longer subjected to domestic positions which outrageously demonstrate the inefficient use of human resources, which in turn leaves the potentials of women grossly untapped. This is a goal Ofunne wants to achieve. Education becomes the prized commodity that will redeem women from being "confined to a domestic sphere."[30] Regardless of her under-privileged status as the eldest daughter in a rural family, she asserts that, "I wanted to be well edu-

27. The first University in Eastern Nigeria, established in 1960.

28. Azuah, p. 7.

29. F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of the Respectable: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988), p. 136.

30. Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), p. 99.

cated with a high school certificate. I wanted to become a teacher and get married to the man of my dream."[31]

Azuah evokes the nervous tension of village life and depicts the dramas of everyday existence in a cross-section of the society – a society that is psychologised, people are not told what to do; they know what to do, because the gender configuration becomes the central plank of cultural life. Azuah's exploration of the burden of womanhood comes very close to Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*.[32] Ofunne at a very tender age is able to resist attempts of the phallocentric precepts of her society to reduce her to a marginal status, when she triumphs over the young boys who are supposed to be Iloba's [Ofunne's younger brother] age mates at the river. The incidence dramatizes signs of incipient determination to overcome her marginal status. From the beginning of the novel to when she is sold off into marriage one will find many examples of attempts to socialize her at an early age into feminine roles, which will in turn render her uncreative, and docile. She is saddled with the responsibility of the domesticity of her home. If she fails in her task to get the family going domestically she becomes accountable for whatever misery emanates from that failure. Thus, Iloba holds her responsible for his being late at school. By the time Ofunne leaves home for school, she has been partially domesticated; partially because her marginal status and the food office fail to leaven her life as a woman. Hence when her entrance exam results indicate that she has passed, she abandons the homestead with immediate alacrity.

In contrast to the *Bildungsroman*, in which the male leaves home to "slay the dragon," Felski opines that "the female on a journey of self-discovery seeks surroundings that aren't a threat to her,"[33] a domain that echoes rather than threatens her sense of self. It should also be noted that in the female *Bildungsroman* the protagonist never runs away, if she embarks on any physical journey for self-rediscovery. It is usually initiated by family members or friends. She hardly escapes because she usually comes back to the space of her limitation. Ifeoma creates the avenue for Kambili's journey to Enugu, Enitan's parents decide to send her abroad because of her involvement in Sheri's rape and Ofunne leaves her home for the sole purpose of acquiring education.

School for Ofunne becomes a place of becoming. She is the favourite among the teachers and students. Ofunne gradually learns to deal with the new environment. However, she is seized by occasional fits of eccentricity, which propel her into exciting troubles with fellow students or the head teacher of the school. Sister Dolan, the

31. Azuah, p. 7.
32. Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (New York: Seal Press, 1988).
33. Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989), p. 135.

head teacher, becomes the symbol of inspiration for Ofunne. She is a true matriarch who understands the exuberance of teenagers and how to brace up to the challenges of that phase of human development. She is a strong role model for Ofunne as she begins her transition from childhood to womanhood.

Ofunne's future suffers a setback with the indisposition of her mother. She is cornered into marriage and her quest for education is truncated as she follows Oko to Kaduna to live as a child-wife, where she enters and sustains herself in the social space of female silence once again. She continues to appear to disappear. Her school days seem to be the most eloquent and vibrant because they were the path to her liberation. Ofunne is stripped of her rights, which are supposed to be parental care and guidance. She is found guilty of being herself and rendered invisible. Ofunne suffers more at the hands of her parents, as Philip Collins points out, "the adult world is generally hostile, vicious, uncomprehending or indifferent, or the child had to minister to instead of being supported by it."[34] Ofunne, for instance, is brought up by parents whose intention is to marry her off when a suitor comes calling, regardless of her age and ambitions. Kambili is beaten by her father; Enitan's parents are torn apart by matrimonial feuding so that she hardly identifies with either of them. All those who should be nurturing them into womanhood constantly demoralize these female characters, who are not stably growing up or being brought up, but are only tumbling up.

Ofunne's deflowering after her mock-marriage becomes an initiation from girlhood into womanhood; she becomes adaptable to matrimonial life with ease immediately she is deflowered, regardless of Oko's aberrant behaviour. However, Oko's promiscuity is abhorrent to her sense of decency. Matrimony for Ofunne gradually becomes an arduous enterprise because her husband refuses to make the enterprise pleasurable. She becomes convinced of Oko's carnality and his unbridled lubricity, as she reminisces on the steady gaze Oko gave her ample-breasted friend Uka, on one of his visits to her school. The gaze is not just an amorous advance, but also an amplification of the degree of his promiscuity. At this point, the novel floats around the existential themes of pain and exile. Out of frustration, Ofunne tries to return to the geography of her childhood through letters, when her state of loneliness and alienation deepens.

Taking her own expectations – regulated by her own society, which is patriarchal – into consideration, Ofunne's circumstances only serve to sustain her growing lack of identity. She refuses to find tranquility in the only space in which society locates her; the kitchen where she spent her childhood. As Oko's wife, she has no choice but to take over the kitchen, as it becomes her private domain. She circum-

34. Philip Collins, *Dickens and Education* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), p. 182.

vents the rules of the kitchen and attains power. Whenever Oko defaults, Ofunne regresses into a defening silence and aloneness, which become frustrating to Oko. This is one of the strategies Ofunne employs to check her philandering husband. The other strategy is the use of her culinary power, which she uses to curb her husband's excesses. When he misbehaves, Ofunne refuses to cook for him. The kitchen becomes the hub for action in the novel, and it is from there that Ofunne attracts her husband's attention. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili's mother uses it for dangerous ends while Sheri in *Everything Good Will Come* uses it to control other characters, especially since she is a consummate cook.

As Ofunne's pregnancy nears its term, Oko decides to take her back home. Mariane Hirsch contends that women hardly break family ties as easily as men irrespective of whatever offence is committed against them. Apart from that factor, this return actually contributes to Ofunne's self awakening – returning to the original site of dependency is a momentous step in the process. Hirsch notes that contrary to the classical *Bidungsroman*, which is linear in nature, the woman's "awakening" is marked by circularity – her need for repetition.[35] Felski substantiates further, that "the heroine must become what she once was, recover an identity which is complete and self-contained, rather than contingent, and historically and socially determined."[36]

The novel climaxes as the full irresponsibility of Oko becomes obvious. The literary representation of women in urban environments often functions symbolically as loss of innocence – the pure daughter and mother of the village is reduced to a prostitute. Ofunne's case belies the above norm, because at the time she returns to the village, she is still naïve. Her refusal to allow the medical doctor to induce birth in order to ease her delivery evidences this. Though Ofunne's child is still-born, she reaches the pinnacle of her development after the delivery. As Oko abandons her at his parents,' she fights her way out of her shackled state as she beats her mother-in-law up for her falsehood. Ofunne's development peaks as she replaces her Catholic God as her crisis lingers. Ofunne fails in every attempt to find meaning and purpose in her life. She is tormented by an existential discontent and disruption of selfhood, stemming from her privileged marginal position as eldest daughter. Ofunne fails to create a purpose or an order in her life, and she abandons her belief in a God that denies her the possibility of such a purpose or order. Her apprenticeship becomes whole as she replaces her Catholic God. She gains physical and spiritual freedom as

35. Marianne Hirsch, "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between Great Expectations and Lost Illusions," *Genre* 12 (1979) 293–311, p. 46.

36. Rita Felski, "The Novel of Self-Discovery: A Necessary Fiction?" *Southern Review* 19 (1986) 131–141, p. 141.

she returns home and presents herself, empty, before Onishe the water goddess. This scene eloquently dramatizes Ofunne's sense of religion. One may confuse her intentions here. It is not the locale that dictates her spiritual cum religious loyalty. She abandons the Christian God, which is an extension of male dominance. Her parents gave her to Oko not only because they wanted money to meet their needs, but they also feel the Okolos are a good Catholic family. Ofunne abandons matrimony because it becomes the symbol of her vitiation. She wants to be educated but her parents sold her off in marriage. Her husband promises to allow her to continue her schooling when they arrive at Kaduna, but she never goes beyond the marginal border of the kitchen and the docile space where she hawks fish. She finally decides to find Sister Dolan and start afresh. She becomes epiphenized in a state of trance as she submits herself nude before Onishe.

After the regression and the return from what Obioma Nnaemeka describes as their "orphic journeys,"[37] these female characters become whole; armed and determined with the resolution to make functional the lessons they have learnt in the process of their *Bildung* and journeys, in a self-fulfilling manner. These female writers achieve numerous goals in exhuming an almost forgotten genre to make constructive and empowering statements. The *Bildungsroman* has proven to be a formidable and unparalleled success as a template by which writers and critics alike can understand Nigerian society and Africa at large. But most importantly, the form has become a postcolonial index for calibrating the growth and development of the African continent with that of the protagonists of these narratives.

Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* maps the protagonist Enitan's journey to womanhood. However, her mother is more of a Victorian woman whose cardinal responsibility is restricted to home making and building. For Enitan to attain individuation she has to grow against her mother's standard. Enitan's struggle for feminine subjectivity becomes complicated as her mother becomes blindly religious because of the death of Enitan's brother. The mother becomes dominating and manipulative. She insists on strict domestic rules which articulate the accepted social conventions of gender and ethnicity and Enitan must conform to these standards. The rape of Sheri, Enitan's friend, further complicates the latter's struggle for individuation.

The function of the *Bildungsroman* in shaping the *Bildung* of its readers is intimately connected to nation-building in Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. Like institutionalized education, Atta uses the *Bildungsroman* as a strategy for de-

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37. Nnaemeka, Obioma, "From Orality to Writing: African Women Writers and the (Re)Inscription of Womanhood," *Research in African Literatures* 25.4 (1994) 137–157, p. 154.

veloping national identity and promoting social cohesion, by endorsing and perpetuating specific ideologies. In *Reconstructing Children: Strategies of Reading for culture and Gender in the Spanish American Bildungsroman,* Julia Kushigian argues that "the goal of the German (*Bildungsroman)* was to inspire the middle class to a life of public service, with obvious benefits for the state,"[38] thus, the history of the *Bildungsroman* tradition is connected to nation-building and the socialization of 'good' citizens.

Atta focuses more on the dialogue around identity and its manifestations for nation building in *Everything Good Will Come*. The basic argument, therefore, rests on the fact that the perspective where the female postcolonial *Bildungsroman* diverges from the conventional template illustrates the effects of gender, race and postcolonialism on the production of both individual and national identity. Kushigian argues that "[t]he female or marginalized, *Bildungsroman* may reject society's rules in an effort to redefine society through culture and gender."[39] While a male European model for *Bildung* has set a standard against which both female and postcolonial novels of development have been measured, understanding non-traditional *Bildungsroman* as entities unto themselves rather than as mere mimicry will help demonstrate the meaning of these alternative stories.

Musing on her difficult journey of *womaning*, Enitan ponders on how she "called out to her voice" (*Everything*).[40] The "voice" to which she is calling refers primarily to her right to speak herself for herself – to be listened to and to be considered a person worthy to be listened to. However, like Kambili, she first needs to gain access to a language and voice, before she can performatively speak herself. As is the case with Kambili, the process of finding voice and gender development mutually inform each other. Therefore, the assertion of one's sexual independence and negotiating one's sexuality provides the feminine subject with the necessary agency for accessing language and voice. As Enitan acquires a language her voice becomes functional as she begins to contest dominant positions both in the familial/private domain and the public/social space. Language invariably gives her the agency to question things dialectically and construct an identity for herself.

The essence of language and sexuality as forces of performativity in the process of becoming or *womaning* is vibrantly expressed in Sheri's rape. Three boys hold her down; gag her, and then execute the act of silencing her through rape. Neither Sheri nor Enitan is able to speak about the event afterwards. Although the incidence

38. J. Kushigian, *Reconstructing Childhood: Strategies of Reading for Culture and Gender in Spanish American Bildungsroman* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell UP, 2003), p. 16.

39. Kushigian, p. 36.

40. Atta, p. 179.

of the rape is chaotic to the psyche of both women, the subject becomes a taboo. Rape can be deconstructed not only as an act that violates feminine sexual autonomy, but also as one that silences or dries up the voice of a woman, leaving her bereft of almost any form of power and agency that she might have had to speak herself. The rape therefore strips Enitan of the power and agency to speak herself, regardless of the fact that the act is not physically performed on her body. Willem Jacobus Smith suggests that "Enitan and Sheri alternate as double and foil of each other."[41] Psychologically, Enitan puts herself in Sheri's position so that it appears as if it is Enitan who is raped. This act of psychic doubling robs Enitan, by implication, of power and agency. This is what makes her obsessed with washing herself after sexual intercourse, and being unable to speak about the incident until many years have passed. Mike Obi is the character who eventually liberates her from the bondage of the rape through a bathing ritual.

Atta's narrative is fascinating because in contrast to the female *Bildungsroman* protagonist, whose gender identity is formed within the psychodynamics of the familial base, the development of Atta's protagonist is marked by discontinuity. She grows against the standard because her father wants her masculinized. This breach explains her instability in the primordial base, the socio-civic and matrimonial spheres. Atta's narrative, like Adichie's, is a *Bildungsroman* that conflates the search for an autonomous female identity with the quest for a meaningful national identity. From analysis of texts, it becomes obvious that these narratives do not only celebrate the coming of age of the protagonists, but also articulate the distinctions between the classical *Bildungsroman* and the African variant of the form. These writers have subverted and altered a western oriented genre to give expression to the politics of identity formation in a postcolonial context. Furthermore, the narration of these novels places primacy on the protagonists as agency, in order to construct the traditional, personal and privatized genre of the *Bildungsroman* by transforming it into a political scheme, making the personal experiences of the protagonists serve as an index to the larger cultural, socio-historical conditions, and thus the protagonists' personal *Bildung* becomes inseparable from the political agenda of their nations. Invariably, the growth and development of Nigeria may be calibrated by the growth process of the protagonist.

As noted in the introductory part of this essay, one of the most fascinating features of these texts as *Bildungsromane* is their point of departure from the traditional variants. The protagonists are unable to conform to the grand dominant

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41. Willem Jacobus Smith, *Becoming the Third Generation: Negotiating Modern Selves in Nigerian* Bildungsromane *of the 21st Century,* MA Thesis (Stellenbosch University, South Africa, 2009), p. 61.

standards their societies have constructed for them, and the circumscribed spaces where they are to negotiate their identity and become women frustratingly trapped within the confines of marginal spaces like their mothers. The growth processes of these protagonists exemplify a variation of the *Bildungsroman* in its contemporary feminist state and offer an alternative to conventional notions of social roles. They articulate the fact that a woman can successfully or unsuccessfully claim the right to be a self-determining individual regardless of patriarchal constraints. They offer a model of resistance to women's oppression. The Nigerian variant of the *Bildungsroman* articulated in these novels portrays the struggle for individuation and the negotiations of feminine subjectivity, while concurrently depicting the plight of women in a society plagued by the debilitating forces of patriarchy and suggesting alternatives to that plight.

Petr Chalupský

Mystic London

The Occult and the Esoteric in Peter Ackroyd's Work

This article focuses on how the occult and esoteric is employed and explored in selected works of Peter Ackroyd, both as a theme and as a determining factor of their narrative structure. It aims to discuss the basic constituents of the writer's mythology of London, namely a cyclic understanding of time, and a focus on the power of the genius loci and the city's outstanding visionaries. It also shows how the occult aspects of these works undermine the traditional narrative principles of the historical novel and by means of pluralisation and hybridisation attempt to invigorate the genre. In order to illustrate the ways in which Ackroyd incorporates elements of the occult and esoteric in his works five novels have been chosen, *Hawksmoor* (1985), *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993), *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), *The Clerkenwell Tales* (2003) and *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* (2008), along with the non-fiction *London: The Biography* (2000).

"Hearing voices, experiencing hauntings, slipping between reality and imagination, and dislocating in time and space, characters and their authors are in different ways projecting a new model of subjectivity,"[1] writes Marina Warner in her rare and in its field unique study of the diverse forms of the spiritual and their modern materialised manifestations, *Phantasmagoria* (2006). She further claims that "[i]n some unprecedented way, the various operating dynamics of magic stories – time shifts, ubiquity, hypnosis, possession, metamorphosis itself – now charge the currents of popular culture more densely than at any time since the first high wave of the Gothic in the late eighteenth century."[2] Ours indeed is an age that is highly suspicious of the myth of the ultimate rational explicability of the world, and the esoteric has gained larger recognition by becoming a frequent subject of philosophy and art, as an active agent in finding answers to numerous questions concerning who we are and why. Artistic creation, above all, represents a natural vent through which the uncanny aspects of human existence can be expressed, and postmodernist literature abounds with works that attempt to institute "a metaphysical and poetic dimension

1. Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 378.
2. Warner, p. 379.

The AnaChronisT 16 (Winter 2011): 171–184 ISSN 1219–2589 (print)

of reality, and help re-position us as we confront our selves and our identities."[3] The British literary scene of the past four decades has been no exception to this rule – writers like John Fowles, Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson and the already mentioned Marina Warner have been drawn by this tendency to challenge rationality as the absolute governing principle of human life by placing the spiritual alongside or above the material.

A specific example of a contemporary British writer who often explores the esoteric in his work is Peter Ackroyd. His novels exemplify a recent tendency of historical fiction that "has delved deeper into the cultural genealogies and 'psychogeographies' that intimately connect our presents/presence with the past."[4] He focuses on the literariness of history, especially that of London, which is best captured in his seminal *London: The Biography* (2000). The idea that the history of the capital is inseparable from the texts produced by its inhabitants also forms the basis of all his London novels, in which the big historical events always take place off-stage, forming a mere background for the author's "private mythology of London."[5] Ackroyd's idiosyncrasy is his foregrounding of the city's "unofficial" history, its enigmatic, obscure or otherwise irrational aspects and phenomena. His historiographic novels always revolve around some mystery through which the city's underside manifests its lines of force and, therefore, the theme and discourse of the irrational plays a significant role in them: the combination of occultism and serial murders; mysticism, communication with spirits and alchemical experiments; mysterious identities related to the motif of forgery; or the myth of the homunculus, the everlasting, artificial, human-like creature combined with the theme of the doppelganger.

In order to illustrate how Ackroyd integrates the theme and discourse of the esoteric into his works, this article will predominantly address his most ambitious project so far, *London: The Biography* (2000), together with his most occult and mystical novels, *Hawksmoor* (1985), *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993) and *The Clerkenwell Tales* (2003). In order to demonstrate how Ackroyd's works constitute a compact thematic and discursive intertextual network, references will also be made to the role of the occult in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) and his latest novel, *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* (2008). All these works reflect their author's insistence that the irrational has always been deeply embedded in the city's texture and thus has inevitably affected the course of its development, its inhabitants' acts and their desire to transform those acts into autonomous narratives.

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3. Warner, p. 379.
4. Nick Bentley, ed., *British Fiction of the 1990s* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 13.
5. Barry Lewis, *My Words Echo Thus: Possessing the Past in Peter Ackroyd* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), p. 75.

As this is a recurrent process, during which new stories appear while past events are reshaped from fresh perspectives or in the light of newly discovered facts, these phenomena become immortalised in London's palimpsestic mythology.

Ackroyd's London is founded on the perpetual encountering of the rational and irrational principles, to neither of which is attributed any truth value. All his books exemplify his conviction that in order to approach and comprehend the city, it is necessary to reconcile them in a, seemingly paradoxical, symbiosis, and thus adopt a "parodic or irreverently playful attitude to history over an ostensibly normative mimesis."[6] Apart from demonstrating the ways in which Ackroyd explores esotericism and mysticism in his works, this article will attempt to illustrate how the author incorporates the theme and discourse of the uncanny into his narrative technique in order not only to make it more elaborate, but also to challenge the readers' most taken-for-granted assumptions about the world by offering alternative modes for its interpretation. The article will also argue that Ackroyd's employment of the esoteric makes his novels more attractive to read and, by hybridising and pluralising them, revivifies the genre of the (post)modern historical novel.

Wandering and Wondering in Eternity: Mythical Time

The elaborate combination of his deep historical and literary erudition and impressive imagination allows Ackroyd to explore a great variety of the city's faces, among which the arcane and the obscure are the most prominent. Ackroyd's mythological London is based on three interconnected fundamental principles that define the city's very essence: the first is a circular, or mythical, conception of time that denies chronological linearity and "rather works forwards and backwards at the same time,"[7] resulting in a mystical timelessness in which the past and the present are no longer distinguishable; the second is an emphasis on the influence of the genius loci, the inexorable energy of certain areas that have retained a power that determines the recurrent pattern of events happening in them; the third is the significance of various individuals who are ahead or out of their time, or "London visionaries" as Ackroyd prefers to term them, who, in different historical periods, inhabit the city and affect its life through a genius and foresight that enable them to embrace the mystical and occult forces embedded in the city's texture.

In the preface to his *London: The Biography*, Ackroyd plainly puts forward his theory of the circularity of mythical time that best captures the city's development, though, as he himself admits, the whole sense of time in London is complicated as it

6. Suzanne Keen, "The Historical Turn in British Fiction," in *Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. James F. English (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 171.

7. Susana Onega, *Peter Ackroyd* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1998), p. 45.

primarily reflects the workings of the imagination.[8] For him, the city "defies chronology," which is the reason why "this book moves quixotically through time, itself forming a labyrinth."[9] From this perspective, London history is not a seamless, sequential account but a "search of those heights and depths of urban experience that know no history and are rarely susceptible to rational analysis."[10] In order to approach, and possibly in part comprehend, the city in its organic wholeness, Ackroyd invites his readers to make a picaresque journey through time, in the course of which they "must wander and wonder … they may experience moments of uncertainty, and on occasions strange fantasies or theories may bewilder them," but the patient and the sensitive will also experience "moments of revelations, when the city will be seen to harbour the secrets of the human world."[11] Instead of following history year by year, Ackroyd probes various iterative, periodic patterns of events, acts and sensibilities across time that are related to one another thematically rather than causally, and that have been repeatedly incited by operations evading rational grasp. Thus, the traditional linear understanding of time, though not rejected altogether, proves ultimately insufficient in capturing the complexity of the city's past. While in *London: The Biography* the secrets of the human world emerge within the network of the book's larger historical and cultural theoretical framework, Ackroyd's novels provide concrete quasi-historical renderings by foregrounding the mystical in order to, ironically, cast light on the "factual" background.

Hawksmoor probes this mythical conception of time and the reader of the novel soon understands that occultism and black magic play a crucial role in the story as Nicholas Dyer confesses that he is a secret Satanist and adherent of an occult science. He is obsessed with the idea that his soul is condemned to reincarnate from one body to another until in one of them it manages to accomplish a work, the greatness of which would be comparable to the act of God's creation of the universe, and that acquiring power over earthly matters automatically ensures the ability to affect the acts of God. Therefore, he arranges his churches in a pattern corresponding to the position of key stars in the sky, the result of which should be a power-concentrating, magical structure through which he hopes "to submit to his will the seven planetary daemons who control them and prevent his transcendental ascesis," with the aim of "establishing a current of sympathetic magic between heaven and earth that would function as a

8. See "Interview between Peter Ackroyd and Julian Wolfreys" (21 December 1997) in Jeremy Gibson and Julian Wolfreys, *Peter Ackroyd: The Ludic and Labyrinthine Text* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 249–63.

9. Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), p. 2.

10. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 2.

11. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 3.

magical ladder to heaven"[12] which his soul could safely climb to an eternal harmony of the Self. Dyer believes human sacrifices at the sites of the individual churches are also necessary and he provides these himself by killing several innocent people.

All these murders, as well as almost any other event in the narrative, are echoed in the same places two and a half centuries later, when once again, children and vagrants fall victim to a serial killer. As detective Nicholas Hawksmoor follows the traces and reads Dyer's secret diary, he begins to understand the significance of the occult scheme of the "loci delicti" and focuses his attention on finding the mysterious vagrant who calls himself the Architect. As the novel progresses to its end and the time and space that separate Dyer and Hawksmoor collapse, the magical and the mysterious prevail over the rational and the coherent. This culminates in the Architect, Dyer, and Hawksmoor rushing through the streets of the city towards the place of their spiritual union, where they are reborn as one being, a child "begging on the threshold of eternity."[13] Although the plot revolves around Hawksmoor's investigation into a series of murders committed in the vicinities of the churches built by Dyer in modern London of the early 1980s, the final twist demonstrates that the novel's key theme is to explore the mystical and occult patterns of the city: in the only invented church in the story, Little St Hugh, Dyer's and Hawksmoor's voices merge into a single mystical voice belonging to neither of them but to some supertemporal reincarnation inhabiting the city's mythical timelessness. As a result, the orthodox conception of history disintegrates, "the past and the present begin to become unnervingly similar and our notion of the present as a secure and, by implication, superior perspective is undermined."[14]

A similar parallelism can be found in *The House of Doctor Dee*, Ackroyd's most overtly spiritualist novel. When Matthew Palmer inherits an old house in Clerkenwell that once belonged to the eponymous Elizabethan mathematician and astrologer who secretly engaged in alchemy and occultism, he immediately gets drawn into its eerie history. He gradually learns that the house stands as if outside time as it repeatedly echoes certain behaviour patterns, ideas or utterances from the past. Haunted by the spirits and voices of the house, Matthew is compelled to experience life situations analogous to those of John Dee four centuries before. As in *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd draws several parallels between the two main protagonists, of which the most notable is their understanding of time as an eternal process comprising cyclically recurrent events, which in effect become coincident or simultane-

12. Onega, p. 46.
13. Peter Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 217.
14. Richard Bradford, *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 83.

ous in some mystical, timeless fifth dimension. When carrying out his research, Matthew feels he has "become part of the continuing historical process, as mysterious and unapproachable as any other period," viewing "the past as [his] present, so in turn the present moment became part of the past."[15] John Dee, likewise, sees himself involved in greater patterns of history – assuming that "the past is restored around us all the time, in the bodies we inhabit or the words we speak," he believes that "there are certain scenes or situations which, once glimpsed, seem to continue for eternity" and that a really strong personality endowed with profound mental energy can incarnate into "the true spiritual body"[16] that stretches over all times.

Ackroyd's persuasion that John Dee was such an exceptional individual permeates almost every page of the novel and his spirit affects the lives of all the characters that find themselves under the spell of the house. In the final chapter, symptomatically entitled The Vision, the two voices of Dee and Matthew coalesce in the universal mythical voice of the city, only to be subsequently accompanied by the narrative voice of Ackroyd himself. Once again, what has long seemed to be an imaginative ghost story turns out to be another confirmation of the author's mythical conception of a London in which the past, the present and the future coexist, intertwined through the eternal power of the human imagination. To bridge the past in a manner that would reflect and celebrate this essential property of the city is what Ackroyd strives to accomplish in his fiction. And so the novel ends with its author's assumption of the prophetic voice of the city, which invites readers to wander/wonder with him: "Come closer, come towards me so that we may become one. Then will London be redeemed, now and for ever, and all those with whom we dwell – living or dead – will become the mystical city universal."[17]

Where Suffering Seems to Linger: Genius Loci

Another essential of Ackroyd's London is the existence of areas within the city that are subject to peculiar temporal and special conditions as a result of which their genius loci has crucial influence on both the events happening in them and their inhabitants' lives, making the city "a place of echoes and shadows."[18] It is as if these areas were spellbound by some half-forgotten, atavistic forces, the power of which, according to Ackroyd, should never be underestimated. In *London: The Biography*, Ackroyd describes numerous such areas, many of them associated with the esoteric and mystical, such as Bloomsbury, which for centuries has been a place of congregation for contro-

15. Peter Ackroyd, *The House of Doctor Dee* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 13.
16. Ackroyd, *The House*, pp. 26, 39, 68.
17. Ackroyd, *The House*, p. 277.
18. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 655.

versial occult orders and secret sects, because of what Ackroyd denotes as "a congregation of aligned forces, by coincidence or design"[19] still remaining at work up to the present day. This theory forms the basis of all his London novels and is also what best demonstrates the complementariness of his fiction and non-fiction works.[20]

As Ackroyd always concentrates on the obscure side of the city, the settings of his novels are places that "emanate misery" and where "suffering seems to linger."[21] In the plot of *Hawksmoor* the disastrous consequences of the operation of these sinister forces are followed over two and a half centuries. Ackroyd mentions two of Nicholas Hawksmoor's churches, St. George's-in-the-East and Christ Church, in *London: The Biography*, because they have always attracted the city's vagrants and other outcasts. The fictitious architect, Nicholas Dyer, is well aware of this when he offers his commentary on one of the miserable parishes in which his new church should be erected.[22] Similarly, the fact that it is not the first time that murders have been committed on the sites of the churches does not surprise Hawksmoor since he has already grown "to understand that most criminals tend to remain in the same districts, continuing with their activities until they were arrested, and he sometimes speculated that these same areas had been used with similar intent for centuries past" because "certain streets or patches of ground provoked a malevolence which generally seemed to be quite without motive."[23] The mystical parallelism of the murders, which includes identical physical locations as well as similar types of victims, together with the significance of the occult diagram formed by the sites of the murders, gradually force Hawksmoor to abandon the purely rational deduction he has been so proud of and assume an intuitive approach that allows him to disclose the larger patterns behind the homicidal acts and to identify the true "culprit."

A similar pattern is seen in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* with the replication of the Ratcliffe Highway murders. Once again, Ackroyd's insistence on the power of the genius loci and his rejection of a chronologically linear understanding of time operate concordantly. It is the spirit of "the same power-concentrating places"[24] that magnetises certain people and events rather than any rationally explicable causes. The Limehouse of the novel is a poverty-stricken, shadowy area and its negative energy recurrently materialises in various violent acts, culminating in a series of ritual murders in and around the Ratcliffe Highway. This area, as Dyer notes in

19. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 463.

20. The recurrent parts of London in Ackroyd's (and other London writers') works are explored in Ian Cunningham's *A Reader's Guide to Writers' London* (London: Prion, 2001).

21. Ackroyd, *London*, pp. 498, 496.

22. Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor*, p. 94.

23. Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor*, pp. 115–16.

24. Onega, p. 68.

Hawksmoor, was already notorious for barbarous killings in the early eighteenth century,[25] but it became infamous because of the slaughter of the Marr family in 1811. In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* the dark spirit of the area comes to life in 1880 when several representatives of the margins of Victorian London society become victims of a homicidal force, the mysterious invisibility of which causes the newspapers to label it the Limehouse Golem. Yet there is one more place that has a crucial, and mainly beneficial, impact upon most of the characters' lives – the Reading Room of the British Museum – where the fates of its frequenters, real and fictional, encounter one another, be it physically or otherwise. Ackroyd presents the Reading Room as a milieu disposing of some almost occult power, which, for example, manages to befriend such different persons as the materialist atheist Marx and the cabbalistic spiritualist Weil. It is therefore not surprising that the mystery of the Limehouse Golem draws many people there who believe it is "the spiritual centre of London where many secrets might finally be revealed."[26] The Reading Room thus becomes an emblem of the mutual inseparability of intellect and spirituality, a true source of the city's geist.

In *The House of Doctor Dee*, Matthew Palmer comes to understand the significance of genius loci when he moves in to the ancient house and starts to investigate its history, a process during which he discovers certain mysterious "subterranean layers" of London that still assert themselves through various eerie manifestations upon the city's "official" face. Consequently, he becomes aware of his being part of the house/city's eternal spiritual body:

> The sense of peace, even in the middle of the city, was so strong that I presume it came from some powerful event in the past. . . . There was a sense of continuing power, of living force here. It was beyond death; it was the condition of the world. . . . It occurred to me then that this was really a city under the ground. It was the eternal city for those who are trapped in time. I was still kneeling beside the memorial in Red Lion Square, but now I seemed to be entering the stone wall of the basement in Cloak Lane. I was becoming part of the old house.[27]

Ackroyd thus exploits the motif of the fictitious house once inhabited by the famous Renaissance scholar and mystic as a metaphor for the occult side of London, perpetuated and deeply embedded in the city's texture as well as in its dwellers' lives.

The area of Ackroyd's specific interest is Clerkenwell, a peculiar place which from the medieval period "became known, and identified, through its sacred and spiritual

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25. Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor*, p. 93.
26. Peter Ackroyd, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 269.
27. Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor*, pp. 43–44.

affiliations."[28] Because of this it has witnessed diverse, incessant, often concurring, forms of occult and radical activities, and thus attracted an incredible variety of eccentric and visionary individuals, from the outcast and insane to writers and philosophers. Clerkenwell's irresistible genius loci explains why Ackroyd decided to locate the house once supposedly belonging to John Dee there, though he in fact lived in Mortlake. The house still contains the concentrated power of its past events and inhabitants so that, as Susana Onega suggests, it functions as "a huge transdimensional door"[29] in which the black, white, green and red doors stand for the alchemic colours of the *quaternarvis*, that is, for the four constitutive elements of earth, air, water and fire, and its three storeys – underground, at ground level and above ground – may replicate the cosmic levels of *ternarvis*, as well as their human equivalents, body, soul and spirit. With his exceptional eye for detail, in *The Clerkenwell Tales* Ackroyd brings to life medieval Clerkenwell in the unsettled year of 1399 with all its idiosyncrasies: tremendous energy, religious extremism, political radicalism and enigmatic events. Through a network of interrelated metafictional historiographic sketches rather than a continuous narrative, the reader is exposed to the operations of multiple undercurrent forces of the city – occult sectarians, heretics, secret plotters and spies alongside aberrant clerics and lunatics. Against the historical background of the time, the reader follows a clandestine fellowship of respected city officials who seem to be conspiring with an apocalyptic heretical sect, the predestined men, as both the groups, though for different reasons, are eager to get rid of the king. All this is foreseen by Sister Clarice and the story gradually unfolds another mystery – that of the relationship between the mad nun and the city authorities. As Ackroyd believes that the genius loci never ceases to operate in such an area, in the concluding paragraphs of the chapter "London's Radicals" in *London: The Biography* he poses the prophetic rhetorical question of whether it was wise of property developers and speculators to choose this "shadowland" for their modernising designs.[30]

Variety, Energy and Darkness: London Visionaries

Ackroyd's mystical "city of vision and prophecy"[31] is populated by numerous personalities, both factual and fictitious, who find themselves "living outside London time"[32] and who, as a result, stand apart from their contemporaries. These "London visionaries" thus occupy the greater cyclical processes of history as they are endowed with a

28. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 457.
29. Onega, p. 59.
30. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 469.
31. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 752.
32. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 465.

certain unearthly capacity that enables them to glimpse, or at least anticipate, eternity. Ackroyd's visionaries can be classified into three categories: the first group is represented by outstanding London artists, mostly writers, who "were preoccupied with light and darkness, in a city that is built in the shadows of money and power" and "understood the energy of London . . . its variety."[33] Ackroyd has already written separate biographies of most of them, namely *T.S. Eliot: A Life* (1984), *Dickens* (1990), *Blake* (1996), *Chaucer* (2005), and *Turner* (2006).[34] The second group are visionary scientists and philosophers, the subjects of Ackroyd's works *The Life of Thomas More* (1998) and *Newton* (2007); and the third are diverse, often peculiar and eccentric, individuals, "the dreamers and the antiquarians,"[35] whose acts and thoughts elude purely rational explanation. London's eternality ensures that it contains them all simultaneously, making them into a single yet polyphonic voice of the city where "the dead seem to be pursuing at the heels of the living."[36]

Representatives of all three groups of visionaries are scattered throughout Ackroyd's work, from dubious sorcerers, conjurors and prophets to writers and thinkers. What connects these sometimes very distinct personalities is their potential to devote themselves to challenging visions that somehow transcend the historical time in which they emerge. In his Postscript to *Dickens*, Ackroyd notes that the writer's exceptionality consists in his life-long "struggle to maintain a vision of the coherence of the world" resulting in "his energetic pursuit of some complete vision of the world" motivated by "so great a concern for the central human progress of the world, yet such a longing for transcendence also."[37] This applies to all Ackroyd's visionaries: they possess the capacity to see and foresee their occupation as part of a supra-temporal continuum across individual time layers. Their conation, on the one hand, caters for and is fueled by the rationalist idea of limitless progress and development but, on the other hand, always contains some transcendental, spiritual momentum essential to elevate it to perpetuity. Two related yet dissimilar examples of such individuals can be found in the protagonists of *The House of Doctor Dee* and *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*.

Ackroyd's Dee and Frankenstein share an insatiable hunger for knowledge. They are both Faustian characters eager to learn ceaselessly in order to disclose all the secrets and mysteries of the world, even at the cost of their own happiness as

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33. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 754.

34. A more detailed treatment of this theme can also be found in the chapter entitled "Cockney Visionaries: London Calling" of Ackroyd's *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002), pp. 319–30.

35. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 757.

36. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 756.

37. Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Vintage, 2002), pp. 576, 577.

such pursuits can easily be turned into an all-absorbing obsession. Dr. Dee is an embodiment of what Ackroyd defines as a visionary because of his ability to combine rational principles with a belief in the power of the esoteric, which he perceives to be essential if complex knowledge and understanding are to be achieved, one who "belonged to every time."[38] Only a scholar who perceives scientific research and experimentation within a larger scope composed of various alternative, non-rational perspectives can enter the vast, timeless tradition that sees "no necessary disparity between the various forms of occult and experimental understanding."[39] Ackroyd repeatedly points out that the "pursuit of knowledge has always been one of the city's defining characteristics, even though it may take unfamiliar forms" and that "in London it is impossible to distinguish magic from other versions of intellectual and mechanical aptitude."[40] Therefore, Ackroyd's Renaissance thinker is not only a respectable mathematician, astronomer, engineer and geographer, but also a person who believes that he can speak with spirits and angels through a magic crystal, that he can discover the original, ancient city of London preserved intact deep below the existing one, or that he can create the homunculus, the everlasting creature that would serve as both divine illumination and guardian spirit to those whose efforts deserve it. "He believed the world to be imbued with spiritual properties ... Each material thing is the visible home of a universal power, or congregation of powers, and it was the task of the enlightened philosopher and alchemist to see these true constituents."[41] This, however, is an immensely complicated quest that might lead a zealous devotee like Dee astray, leaving him "infatuated with the poetry of power and darkness."[42]

Symptomatically, what almost ruins Dee restores him back to life eventually – the belief in otherworldly powers makes him rediscover the humanistic belief in the paramount importance of getting to know oneself. It is his willingness to engage in activities reaching beyond physical existence that allows Dee, and his modern double Palmer, to realise that in order to understand the mystery of the universe it is first necessary to come to terms with private fears and secrets buried deep inside oneself, that "God is within man ... and he who understands himself understands the universe."[43] However, Ackroyd goes further than that in his toying with the reader – having explained the mystical lore of the creation of the homunculus he implies that Matthew might be the latest avatar of this perpetually recurrent, super-

38. Ackroyd, *The House*, p. 132.
39. Ackroyd, *London*, pp. 502–3.
40. Ackroyd, *London*, p. 501.
41. Ackroyd, *The House*, p. 133.
42. Ackroyd, *The House*, p. 133.
43. Ackroyd, *The House*, p. 133.

temporal being. The novel's central conceit of the modern characters, including the narrator/writer himself, as reincarnations of the Renaissance occult practitioners or even of their occult creations adds up to the specific dynamism of both its mystical subject matter and the corresponding symbolism and parallel narrative structure.

At the beginning of *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein*, the central character, with his urgent yearning for ultimate knowledge, appears to be Dee's mythical disciple. An experienced Ackroyd reader is not in the least surprised that the semi-derelict, deserted pottery factory which Frankenstein transforms into a secret laboratory for his ill-fated project, is located in Limehouse. Moreover, in London he finds himself in an intellectually and spiritually inspiring atmosphere of Romantic turmoil as his company consists of notable champions of radical political ideas and outstanding thinkers and poets such as the Shelleys, Byron, Coleridge and Godwin. However, what distinguishes Frankenstein from Dee is his reluctance to acknowledge that other than scientifically rational processes might be at work in his experiments, as he dismisses Shelley's claim that "the great poets of the past were philosophers or alchemists. Or magicians. They cast off the vesture of the body, and in their pursuits, became pure spirit."[44] Having rejected the spiritual principle, Frankenstein falls prey not to the monster created in his laboratory but to the monsters in his unconscious: on his nighttime ramblings between Smithfield and Limehouse he becomes haunted by nightmarish shadows and fearsome murders and the reader gradually understands that "the dark agent of desolation"[45] he pursues is not in fact a dead man restored to life but "[his] double, [his] shadow, without which [he] would not exist."[46] Only after his disputes with Byron's personal doctor, John Polidori, whom Ackroyd, for the sake of the plot, transforms into a Jewish cabbalist believing in the ancient legend of the Golem, does Frankenstein admit the significance of the spiritual aspects of human existence. Although the novel starts as a variation on Mary Shelley's celebrated novel, it turns out to be an absorbing psychological thriller exploring the Jekyll-and-Hyde theme of doubles, doppelgangers and split personality. Frankenstein's progressive madness can be understood as an effect of the strenuous suppression of his irrational self, which dooms him to end up as a tragically deluded idealist rather than a mystical visionary.

44. Peter Ackroyd, *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* (London: Vintage, 2009), p. 9.
45. Ackroyd, *The Casebook*, p. 253.
46. Ackroyd, *The Casebook*, p. 259.

Making the Dead Speak: The Divine Magic of the Imagination

In their speculative reinventions of history Ackroyd's novels exemplify what Linda Hutcheon describes as "historiographic metafiction,"[47] what Marguerite Alexander includes in the category of the "writerly novels,"[48] and what Jeremy Gibson and Julian Wolfreys term "ludicrous texts," achieving "their effect through a deliberate display and deployment of artifice, role-paying, pantomimickry, palimpsest, parody, pastiche, intertextual referentiality."[49] The playfulness of Ackroyd's novels consists not only in their author's altering of received historical facts and data in favour of his "could-have-been" renderings, but also in his purposeful employment of the uncanny and irrational elements within the novels' narrative framework. On the one hand, Ackroyd is a postmodernist writer, though he himself rejects such labelling, seeing himself as "belonging to a native London or English tradition ... that has existed for such a long time and is part of a very different sensibility."[50] Yet, on the other hand, his imaginative and erudite narratives avoid the trap of becoming self-consciously about themselves as they always explore certain aspects of the world they mediate. The central one of these aspects is the proposing of an alternative conception of reality based on an emphasis on an esoteric and mystical interpretation of events. Such an approach to writing might be considered disruptive and subversive, "but it is difficult to be subversive in a society that refuses to listen"[51] – and the number of devoted Ackroyd readers proves that the perspective he offers is hardly one to be dismissed as irrelevant.

The esoteric concern also determines the formal structuring of Ackroyd's narratives by making it more elaborate and thus open to interpretation. This is especially apparent in *Hawksmoor* and *The House of Doctor Dee*, which are built around an archetypal mythical conception: both Dyer and Dee believe in a cosmological vision that could remove them from the world of matter to a transcendental level and thus ensure their transmutation from the mortal physical body into the eternal spiritual one. The mythical pattern manifests itself in an all-pervading duality and complementarity of characters, names, events, and utterances that perpetually reduplicate in the circularity of time. In addition, the duality is reflected by the structural organisation of the novels in which chapters depicting the contemporary world alternate with those

47. See the chapter entitled "Historiographic metafiction: 'The pastime of past time' " of Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 105–23.

48. Marguerite Alexander, *Flights from Realism: Themes and Strategies in Postmodernist British and American Fiction* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), p. 167.

49. Gibson and Wolfreys, p. 2.

50. Lewis, p. 181.

51. Alexander, p. 202.

taking place in the early eighteenth and late sixteenth centuries respectively, while in the final chapter the protagonists and their narrative voices, together with that of the author, leak into one another in an unearthly reincarnation inhabiting the realm of the city's mythology. As both the novels feature mystical patterns, for attentive readers their structure also invites occult symbolic interpretation. Onega, for instance, shows how the chapter division of *The House of Doctor Dee* corresponds to the arrangement of the four elements in the hieroglyphic monad,[52] an esoteric symbol invented by John Dee to signify the unity of the universe. However, no matter how alluring these interpretations are, Ackroyd is far from forcing them on the reader – they are simply inherent in his novels for those who wish to discover them.

Ackroyd's use of the esoteric and occult is not motivated by his desire to shock readers or to reject rationality altogether, but primarily to variegate his narratives and the historical novel in general. The theme and the discourses it produces challenge most readers' assumptions about the world and, in effect, help to both pluralise and hybridise the genre. The spiritual and the rational are always depicted as inseparable and complementary, as two sides of one coin whose simultaneous interference proves necessary in order to approach the basic questions concerning human identity. As Barry Lewis claims, Ackroyd's obsession with occult matters is rather a plot device subsidiary to the author's true concerns – resurrections of the past through "the necromancy of words and language."[53] What all his protagonists have in common, whether his beloved London or its visionaries, is the immense power of their imagination, "the divine spark leaping across chaos."[54] It is the imagination in its endless poetic, scientific and philosophical varieties, the unceasing creative spirit that truly transcends materiality and allows an individual to perceive life from a different, alternative and possibly enriching perspective.[55] Although Ackroyd's novels feature diverse forms of the uncanny, their supreme magic rests in the multiplicity of histories and destinies brought to life thanks to the power of his imagination. The rich tradition of what he calls the English imagination is the spiritual force Ackroyd espouses above all: "So who in this world can make the dead speak? Who can see them in vision? That would be a form of magic – to bring the dead to life again, if only in the pages of a book."[56]

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52. For Onega's more complex scrutiny of the two novels' occult formal structure see the chapter entitled "A Dream of Wholeness and of Beauty" of *Peter Ackroyd*, pp. 43–65.

53. Lewis, p. 80.

54. Ackroyd, *The Casebook*, p. 46.

55. In "The Eye of the Imagination" chapter of *Phantasmagoria*, Marina Warner draws a similar parallel between the deep strata of the spiritual and the logic of the imaginary.

56. Ackroyd, *The House*, p. 258.

Home-Grown Romanticism

David Fairer, *Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790–1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Thinking of Romanticism as a radical turn away from tradition or as a disruptive historical moment may illustrate a claim Jerome McGann makes in his *Romantic Ideology*: that the study of Romanticism at large suffers from the lack of critical distance and is therefore under the ideological restraint of those ideas that it ostensibly examines.[1] Early responses to the historical events of the 1780s and 90s voiced in a rhetoric of revolution may have contributed, arguably, to the later critical evaluation of that period as a radical new beginning. In *Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790–1798*, David Fairer looks at this politically and poetically decisive time in England from the conservative side of the revolutionary debate. Instead of pursuing ideas we might call Romantic by virtue of their novelty, he highlights those that persist through the 18th century well into the period we have been trained to think of as the beginning of something entirely new.

Fairer's book is part of a recent trend in Romantic studies that emphasizes the continuities between Romanticism and the 18th century. A new *Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740–1830,* which came out in 2004, traces the roots of what is "still often defined as the 'Romantic' period"[2] back to the literary culture and "a series of cultural, social, and political developments"[3] of the 18th century. Fairer does more interesting and difficult investigative work by looking at a potential, surprising, and fundamental philosophical continuity between Lockean empiricism and ideas of poetry, friendship, and identity that occupied Coleridge and his friends in the 1790s.

At the heart of Fairer's argument is the claim that the poetic output of the 1790s in England is better described through "a native eighteenth-century organic that is empirical in character" (16) rather than the German idealist tradition. Though suspicious of binaries, in his early chapters Fairer himself makes heavy use of a set of binaries to sharpen the distinction between empiricist and idealist notions of organicism. Diversity, continuity, and process are therefore contrasted with unity, teleology, and structure. These pairs reverberate throughout the book.

The specifically British organic that looms behind the major claims of this study is derived from Locke's *Ideas* of *Identity* and *Diversity* (33), which emphasized the continuity of personal identity through change and disruption. Locke's metaphor of the tree for identity also serves as a governing metaphor for Fairer's book: the tree "continues to be the same Plant, as long as it partakes of

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The views expressed in the book reviews do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors of *The AnaChronisT*.

the same Life, though that Life be communicated to new Particles of Matter vitally united to the living Plant, in a like continued Organization" (34). Continuation through change and difference, communication, vitality, and, above all, organization are concepts that connect his discussions of history, the British constitutional debate, poetic friendships and volumes of poetry.

In Locke's metaphor, 'organization' is central to the life of the plant: for diverse elements to cohere under an organic whole, they must be organized and the identity of the whole is inevitably shaped by the manner of the organization. As the title of the book suggests, Fairer is equally devoted to the idea of 'organization.' It places in centre stage the key issues: what does it mean to organize poetry? Who organizes it and how? The title intentionally puzzles in order to encourage us to recognize our own cemented notions of poetry. If we are perplexed by what "organising poetry" can possibly mean, it is because we still think of poetry as the product of a mysterious infusion of transcendental inspiration into a lonely genius. Fairer's title warns us that we are about to enter a very different world of poetry: an empirical world where writing poems is an entirely human endeavour, one which is strongly suggestive of revision, negotiation, and collaboration.

Fairer's interest in organization has methodological consequences. The book itself is, first of all, an impeccable exercise in organization. In the manner of an evenly expanding sphere, each chapter further explains and enriches the central argument, which never fails to maintain its centrality. Fairer uses the relevant aspects of Locke's identity theory (continuity, process, and organization) to explain the circumstances which directly or indirectly affected Coleridge and his friends during the 1790s. Hence, we get a sort of Lockean re-evaluation of the immediate historical context – the British responses to the French Revolution and the latter's effect on the constitutional debate between Paine and Burke – in which Paine and revolutionary sentiment are allied with the idealist organic, while Burke and the conservative argument are seen in terms of empirical organicism. From the historical circumstances, Fairer goes on to describe a nurturing poetic context of noncanonical poets of the 1780s, which effectively grounds the Coleridge circle in the 18th-century tradition of "riperian" (112) or "the riverbank-revisited" (113) poetry.[4] From the poetic context, we transition to Coleridge's early poetic persona in his first volume of poetry and his friendships with Charles Lamb, Charles Lloyd, and John Thelwall. These discussions occasion genuinely interesting and refreshing pieces of criticism: a psychological-poetic portrait of the young Coleridge and a sketch of the Coleridge–Lamb–Lloyd friendship. Fairer looks at the way in which Coleridge organizes individual poems into larger units in the volumes of *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796)

and *Sonnets from Various Authors* (1796), in order to navigate in these areas of the personal. The chapters on the two 1796 volumes are the heart of the book in the sense that they show how the argument in the early chapters translates into actual critical practice.

Although Fairer does not make a case for the validity of the bibliographical and biographical contexts in which he reads the poems, the justification is implicit in his choice of the specific works, which are either conversation poems or, in a literal sense, conversational because they belong to a clearly defined tradition. He reads poems in dialogue either with their antecedents or with their bibliographical companions, and in certain cases alongside various surviving text variants or the poet's related correspondence. His interpretations are often informed by the position of a poem relative to others in the volume, the way in which they are arranged and cooperate with each other. The meaning of a poem, Fairer implies by this method, depends also on these juxtapositions and negotiations inherent in the relation of parts to each other and to the whole.

Wordsworth's friendship with Coleridge is conspicuously absent from this study, especially considering the emphasis laid on the latter's friendships with Lamb, Lloyd and Thelwall. There is, however, a brilliant chapter on "Tintern Abbey," "The Old Cumberland Beggar," and "The Ruined Cottage," in which Locke's empirical 'one common life' serves as an alternative to the pantheistic 'One Life' model of nature, in which these poems are often read. Fairer's exciting reading of the Wordsworthian landscape draws on a distinction between pastoral and georgic modes. The by now well-established dichotomy between the idealist and empirical versions of the organic echoes in this juxtaposition. The pastoral mode represents a prelapsarian, innocent, unified world of Eden, while the georgic depicts the postlapsarian world "of time and change where nature offers a constant challenge to human strength, skill, and wisdom" (262) and where consequently organization is vital to keeping nature at bay.

The latest date by which Fairer is able to trace the empirical organic in the works of Coleridge and his friends is 1801, when Coleridge, after a tour in Germany in 1798–9, finally renounced Lockean empiricism for "its rejection of 'innate ideas' " (309). One of the virtues of this book is that it respects its own narrow temporal margins and does not seek the kind of generality that a new period definition could enjoy. Fairer's methodological impulse, in accord with his argument, is to forgo a unifying general theory for a more flexible, heterogeneous, and, let us say, organic study.

Zsófia Barna

Notes

1. Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
2. Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee, eds., *Cambridge Companion to English Litera-*

ture 1740–1830 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. xi.

3. Keymer and Mee, p. xii.

4. By the terms "riperian" or "riverbank-revisited" poetry, Fairer designates a late 18th-century British tradition of poetry that "established the revisiting of a river bank as the locus for a meditative self-assessment in terms of past and present" (110). The tradition originated with Thomas Warton's sonnet "To the River Lodon" and in the 1780s and 90s drew contributions from various poets such as William Lisle Bowles, Thomas Park, Edward Gardner, Charlotte Smith, Henry Kett, Robert Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

About Romanticism through Genre

David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

"To argue for a Romantic genre theory may seem surprising. This is the period when William Wordsworth writes that every author must 'creat[e] the taste by which he is to be enjoyed,' when Madame de Stael praises Germany as opposed to France because its authors 'form [their] public,' and when Victor Hugo insists that writers be judged by the 'laws of their personal organization' instead of 'rules and genres.' But as Hugo indicates Romanticism may not so much reject genre as expand its provenance so that it is no longer a system of exclusion."[1] These opening lines of Tilottama Rajan's essay, "Theories of Genre" provide a perfect summary of the underlying argument of *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*. In his new book, David Duff systematically investigates the literary, cultural, social and political context of the long-standing critical assumption that the Romantics were "hostile to genre" (1) or that they were interested in them "only to transcend or dissolve them" (1). His confessed aim is to go against the anti-generic view of Romanticism and to display its very opposite: the Romantics' hyperconsciousness about genre. This does not seem to be a new claim. Duff points to studies by Susan Wolfson[2] and Stuart Curran[3] as hallmarks in approaching the Romantic period from a generic perspective; the former with the focus on the politicization of the poetic form, the latter with an insistence on the Romantic expansion of generic repertoire. The real novelty of Duff's recent book lies in its comprehensive focus. Duff's interest is not restricted to the development of a single genre, as is the case with Tilottama Rajan's "Romanticism and the Death of Lyric Consciousness,"[4] where the transformation of the lyric form from a monological to a dialogical discourse is addressed; Chapter 5 in Cyrus Hamlin's *Hermeneutics of Form*,[5] which relates Romantic treatment of the ode through particular pieces by Coleridge, Keats and Shelley; essays on the sonnet or the romantic fragment in *Romanticism and Form*;[6] or Duff's own

study on the politicization of the romance in Shelley's poetics.[7] Although he does occasionally address the specific nature of the Romantic treatment of particular genres like the sonnet or the ode, Duff claims in the "Preface" that his intent was to map out "assumptions about and attitudes to genre" in British Romanticism and to analyze the "historical and cultural force fields that shape the long-term destinies of genres" (vii). In its more general generic scope, though the emphasis is on poetry, the book also considers "the destiny" of drama and the novel. What makes Duff's observations even more fascinating is his constant alertness to paratextual minutiae such as titles, subtitles or prefaces; as well as letters, table-talk, epigraphs, footnotes, and marginalia, not to mention references to non-canonical writers and texts. The comprehensive nature of the discussion implies one further perspective: Duff creates an international as well as a historical context in which he analyzes the British Romantics' attitude to genre. German aesthetic theories are systematically brought into the picture and related to the British scene, thus establishing a fruitful dialogue between generic concepts of the two nations that excelled most in Romantic genre theory and practice. If spatial relations within the Romantic field are noted, the temporal relation between Romanticism and the preceding period is equally indispensable. Accordingly, notions about the Neoclassical genre system with its strict classification of literary genres, as well as the gradual modifications it went through, recur in almost every chapter, thus widening the spectrum of information necessary to our understanding the tendencies that engendered the emergence of the new system. Before going into further details, it is important to mention the source to which this book owes a considerable debt: M. H. Abrams's groundbreaking study on Romantic literary theory, *The Mirror and the Lamp*.[8] Though written more than half a century earlier, Abrams's impact can easily be pinpointed on the pages of the present book. Apart from the citations included in the heading of each chapter, Duff clearly draws on Abrams's findings, especially when Neoclassical literary criticism is concerned. However, what Abrams did not include in his study, namely particulars about the Romantics' genre consciousness, is exactly what Duff explores chapter by chapter.

Chapter 1, entitled "The Old Imperial Code," begins with the discussion of *Bell's Classical Arrangement of Fugitive Poetry*, an anthology published in 1789 which attempted to arrange non-canonical poems along the lines of a neo-Aristotelian genre system. As Duff notes, the publisher John Bell had to face the problem that the classical genre system is "no longer an adequate map of the modern literary terrain" (28). However, French Classicism with its adherence to generic laws and rules

is presented without the usual Romantic bias: Duff actually shows that the Neoclassical paradigm was not as rigid as many expect and that it went through serious modifications in the second half of the 18th century thanks to newly emerging aesthetic theories of the Enlightenment – such as primitivism, the theory of the sublime and the new rhetoric of the Scottish Enlightenment. He does not hesitate to highlight the fact that the old system was being pulled down from the inside; Pope, Addison and Shaftesbury had a vital role in the process of modification. In the same vein, Wordsworth and Coleridge are not celebrated for their revolutionizing genre theory but depicted as having serious doubts engendered by their peculiar position between the old and the new systems.

The ancient and modern attitudes to genre are polarized in an excerpt from Friedrich Schlegel's *Dialogue on Poetry*, which opens the second chapter. It is meant to inform the reader that the co-existence of these two attitudes in the so-called High Romantic period provided writers, most notably Wordsworth and Coleridge, with a dilemma and that their attitude to genre was far more complicated than a traditional reading of texts by these authors might suggest. The other important issue raised in this chapter is the theoretical findings of the Jena circle and the intricate interrelation of British and German theories. Though Duff admits that "genre theory in Britain is more empirical and descriptive and less abstract and speculative than its German counterpart" (73), he also claims that "*on its own terms* the British debate on genre was as profound and far-reaching as the German" (74, my italics). An in-depth analysis of certain parts from Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and Wordsworth's Preface to his 1815 collection of *Poems* serves to substantiate this hypothesis.

The very title of Chapter 3 – "(Anti)-Didacticism," with the prefix in parentheses – implies that once again Duff has something up in his sleeve against preconceived notions about the anti-didactic strain in British Romanticism. First, he lists a number of texts and paratexts from Blake, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley and Anna Barbauld, which do indeed support this belief, then he enumerates the counter-currents to anti-didacticism in the Romantic period by way of reference to Coleridge, Shelley, Isaac D'Israeli and Joanna Baillie, who all celebrated "poetry's irresistible influence" and "writers' political power" (107). Duff calls our attention to the fact that the genre dedicated to instructing the reader, namely the didactic poem, was "far from disappearing in this period" but it "acquired a visibility and prestige it had not experienced since the time of Pope" (111); furthermore, the end of the chapter is devoted to spotting the inconsistencies of some notable figures concerning didacticism. The example offered here is Wordsworth's *The Ex-*

cursion which invited much controversy; it was labeled either "arrogantly didactic" (by Francis Jeffrey) or criticized (by Coleridge and Hazlitt) for its "breach of generic decorum" (114). Duff eventually arrives at the conclusion that teaching and instruction were only acceptable in literary texts if they were not offered in a direct, not to say palpable, way.

In Chapter 4 ("Archaism and Innovation"), the problem of temporality in the critical discussion of genres is addressed. At the beginning of the chapter, Duff cites Bakhtin's very strong claim that the birth of the novel rendered every other genre obsolete, the novel being the only genre endowed with a future. Duff, however, insists on proving that the Romantics did stand up to the challenge of modernity as far as ancient poetic forms were concerned. Duff sets out from the well-known Ancients versus Moderns dispute prevalent in the eighteenth century. He discusses the two opposite responses to the challenge of the past: the Neoclassical project of improvement (to make it new), and the antiquarian movement subsequent to it (to make it old), conceived in the spirit of primitivism. From here he proceeds to the Romantics' answer to the call of the past, via an extensive analysis of the fragment, the Romantic genre par excellence. He offers most valuable insights into the psychological condition of Neoclassical as well as Romantic writers. He claims that while the Neoclassics relieved the burden of the past by getting as close as possible to ancient poetic forms, the Romantics registered their "belatedness in their chosen genre while still making an original contribution to it" (149). Another interesting feature in Duff's argument is his following up the etymology of such terms as 'ancient' and 'innovating,' and what connotations they had to an 18th-century reading public. Such instances do not only serve to make the argument well-founded: it is here that the author's thoroughness and attention to details emerge.

Helen Darbishire's famous joke about Wordsworth closes the chapter, which cleverly summarizes Duff's idea about Romantic tension with regards to possibilities of artistic performance. The essence of the joke is that Wordsworth could not write his *magnum opus*, *The Recluse*, he could only write a Prelude to it and an Excursion from it, which is interpreted by Duff as perfectly symbolic of the "gap between [the Romantics'] generic ambitions and [their] actual performances" (153).

Having considered the cultural, social, historical, and aesthetic aspects of Romantic genre theory in Britain in the previous chapters, there is nothing left to be done but to offer a synthesis of the literary performance. Chapter 5, entitled "The Combinatorial Method," discusses what is probably the most controversial issue in Romantic poetry, which elicited the assumption that the Romantics were hostile to genre:

genre-mixing. Friedrich Schlegel's theory of the combinatorial method serves as a starting point for the argument. Quite uniquely, Duff emphasizes Schlegel's use of chemical terminology to which Coleridge's use of the same terminology in his distinction between fancy and imagination might be traced back. Based on Coleridge's discussion of different mixings, Duff distinguishes between smooth-mixing and rough-mixing, the first being of a more familiar kind, where the different generic components are united in seamless unity. He categorizes Coleridge's conversation poems, Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Jane Austen's *Emma* as primary instances of smooth-mixing, whereas Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Byron's *Don Juan* are exemplary of rough-mixing, in which genres are juxtaposed rather than integrated. An exciting addition to this argument is the extension of genre-mixing to political discourse, primarily about the French Revolution which is itself seen as a "grotesque and sinister Mischgedicht" (188). Bearing in mind Duff's earlier scholarly interest, one is not surprised to see that it is Shelley and his Great Poem that is discussed as the most far-reaching achievement in genre-mixing: an in-depth analysis of his lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound*, which exemplifies Schlegel's ideal of a progressive, universal kind of poetry and incorporates Shelley's theoretical ideas into its text, closes this section of the book.

In the "Conclusion," the ode is discussed at some length, which seems to be a most appropriate summary of the book since "[t]hough being one of the oldest and most conventionalized of genres, the ode contributed to some of the strongest literary innovations of the period" (209).

There are a number of reasons why it is so difficult to put down this study once you started reading it. On the one hand, it might provide a Romantic scholar with a huge amount of invaluable information, not only because of the author's well documented arguments, but also because instead of concentrating on well-known texts, he has unearthed fascinating paratextual evidence that might have evaded professional eyes. In addition, thanks to its uniquely wide scope, scholars of Neoclassical literature and German aesthetic theory may also find it most profitable. On the other hand, the general reader is similarly addressed since Duff does not take anything for granted: he begins his argument with the most basic information necessary for the reader to follow him and constantly refers back to what he said earlier to enhance understanding. Critical response to the book has been immediate and very positive: it won the ESSE Book Award for Literatures in the English Language 2010.

Réka Tóth

Notes

1. Tilottama Rajan, "Theories of Genre," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Romanticism*, ed. Marshall Brown (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 226.
2. Susan J. Wolfson, *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997).
3. Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (New York: OUP, 1986).
4. Tilottama Rajan, "Romanticism and the Death of Lyric Consciousness," in *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, ed. Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985).
5. Cyrus Hamlin, *Hermeneutics of Form: Romantic Poetics in Theory and Practice* (New Haven: Schwabe, 1998).
6. Alan Rawes, ed., *Romanticism and Form* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
7. David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994).
8. Meyer Howard Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (London: OUP, 1971).

"Brand" New Women?

Mária Kurdi, *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011)

Mária Kurdi's latest book *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women* is an engaging and stimulating study of twentieth-century Irish drama authored by women. As the title suggests, Kurdi examines the ways in which women's theatre re-presents Irish female experience in order to "interrogate, subvert and deconstruct conventional gendered norms and female roles" (13) historically constructed in the dramatic work of canonical male playwrights. The growing interest in critical readings of this kind is apparent in a number of recent publications, including *Irish Literature Since 1990: Diverse Voices* (ed. Scott Brewster and Michael Parker, Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009), *Sub-Versions: Transnational Readings of Modern Irish Literature* (ed. Ciaran Ross, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010) and *Irish Women Writers: New Critical Perspectives* (ed. Elke D'hoker, Raphael Ingelbien and Hedwig Schwall, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), all of which contain essay contributions by Mária Kurdi.

In *Representations of Gender*, Kurdi examines the ways Irish women's drama developed through the twentieth-century, especially in relation to the changing concept of women's roles in Irish society. Drawing on the work of contemporary feminist critics, including Melissa Shira, Margot Gayle Backhus and Moynagh Sullivan, Kurdi argues that in the plays of William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey women "appeared as largely phallic constructions in a patriarchal culture" in which "female characters were either pushed to the periphery of these [i.e. male] relationships, or de-

ployed to evoke ideas about and ideals of Ireland" in order to represent the woman as a "central icon of Irish nationalism " (10). Kurdi sees this demonstrated in *Cathleen ni Houlihan, The Countess Cathleen, Deirdre of the Sorrows* and *Juno and the Paycock*. According to the author, these plays are to be considered against the wider historical process of the decolonisation of Ireland, which shaped the theatrical characterisation of women in a particular way. During the country's anti-colonial struggle against the British Empire, female figures often embodied the nation's desire and/or failure to achieve independence. This is manifested in the representation of women as victimised characters who inevitably face martyrdom in their struggle to achieve self-fulfilment through self-realisation.

In Chapter One Kurdi examines the works of the first female playwrights of the century, Lady Augusta Gregory and Teresa Deevy and looks at the ways in which a new type of female subjectivity emerged in their plays. As co-founder and leading playwright of the Irish National Theatre, Gregory was deeply aware of contemporary representations of women. Considering *Kincora*, *Dervorgilla* and *Grania*, Kurdi argues that Gregory refuted the "patriarchal discourse of Irish nationalism" which attributed to women the role of the passive and inferior counterpart of the Irish male. In Kurdi's view, Gregory formed the character of her heroines in such a way that they could develop a special kind of female subjectivity which allowed them to assume a more active role in determining their fate in a male dominated world. Kurdi sees this as Gregory's intention to address the gender binaries principally established by the nationalist discourse of the Irish Literary Revival period (16).

Teresa Deevy's plays are considered in relation to women's changing role in the new, politically independent Ireland. Kurdi argues that the victimisation of women deepened as the Catholic Church strengthened its role in Irish society during the 1930s. The patriarchal ethos of the Revival period was reinforced by the articles of the Irish Constitution, which confined women to the private sphere of the family home. In Kurdi's view, the discrimination and the oppression of Irish women continued by way of internal colonisation within the boundaries of marriage. Three plays are discussed in this chapter, *The Disciple*, *The King of Spain's Daughter* and *Katie Roche*, all of which address the restrictions of the patriarchal ethos embedded in the new Irish Constitution and in the teachings of the Catholic Church. Deevy's indebtedness to Synge's plays is identified here in a convincing manner, attention being drawn to the fact that Deevy's aim was to revise the canonical male authors' representation of women.

In Chapter Two Kurdi examines how female playwrights from 1980 to the present have managed to challenge traditional representations of the female body as the symbol of moral val-

ues and/or sexual desire. The female dramatists of this period address the problem of ageing and its effects on the body in a manner which allows them to contemplate different kinds of female subjectivity. The plays analysed in this chapter are Patricia Burke Brogan's *Eclipsed*, Emma Donoghue's *Ladies and Gentlemen,* Marie Jones' *Women on the Verge of HRT,* Gina Moxley's *Danti Dan,* Stella Feehily's *Duck* and Marina Carr's Midlands trilogy. Kurdi offers a subtle analysis of the ways in which women's experience of pregnancy, rape, incest, homosexuality, teenage violence, domestic abuse, HRT and death "complicate the boundaries of gendered subjectivity" (41), first formulated at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the next chapter the performative aspects of female identity formation are discussed, with special attention to the carnivalesque elements of women's plays. Kurdi groups together Miriam Gallagher's *Shyllag,* Paula Meehan's *Mrs Sweeney*, Emma Donoghue's *Ladies and Gentlemen,* Patricia Burke Brogan's *Eclipsed,* Marie Jones's *Women on the Verge of HRT* and *Weddings, Weening and Wakes*, as well as Marina Carr's *Low in the Dark*, *By the Bog of Cats* and *Woman and Scarecrow*. According to the author, in these plays performance "enable[s] the female characters to expose the means of objectification" (70) in order to subvert the inherited stereotypes.

There is a distinct shift from the Republic to Northern Ireland in Chapter Four, through an interesting analysis of female (-male) relationships. Kurdi examines the extent to which female genealogies, or indeed the lack of them, have conditioned the lives of heroines. The plays which Kurdi chooses to analyse include Christine Reid's *Tea in a China Cup*, Jennifer Johnston's *Christine*, and Ann Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* and *After Easter*. Kurdi claims that the sectarian divide and the militant culture of Northern Ireland during the Troubles reinforced the patriarchal character of both the Catholic and the Protestant communities. This resulted in the further victimisation of women in the public and the private spheres. Plays by Southern Irish playwrights, including Marina Carr, Patricia Burke Brogan, Gina Moxley and Stella Feehily, are also considered in this chapter in order to help the author demonstrate the influence of the Catholic Church on the lives of Southern Irish communities.

Chapter Five, on storytelling and narration, discusses women characters' use "of storytelling to expose and contest the delimiting effects of dominant, oppressive metanarratives and discursive practices" (128). Once again, Kurdi emphasises that female characters become creative subjects who, through narration, take an active role in shaping their stories, lifting them out of the dominant patriarchal discourse. As illustration, a detailed analysis is provided of several Northern Irish plays, including *Somewhere over the Balcony by* Marie Jones, *Tea in a China Cup* by Christina Reid

and *Christine* by Jennifer Johnston. These are analysed alongside *The Mai* by Marina Carr, *Shyllag* by Miriam Gallagher and *Treehouses* by Elizabeth Kuti.

The intercultural nature of contemporary theatre provides the main theme of the following chapter, which is divided into three parts. The first centres on the revival of ancient Greek and Celtic mythology in contemporary women's theatre and the second focuses on the indebtedness of women's drama to the works of Samuel Beckett and Brian Friel, while the last section looks at the influence of world literature on modern Irish plays by women. While this chapter is a valuable contribution to the understanding of these plays in a broader cultural context, the thematic cohesion between this section and the rest of the book is somewhat weak.

Kurdi returns to the main theme of the book in the final chapter, which examines the effects of spatial relations on identity formation. It is argued that women playwrights use space as means to indicate the entrapped nature of the female experience. The spatial restrictions of location emphasize the difficulties with which the protagonists are faced in their effort to attain an independent female subjectivity. Kurdi argues that in the plays of Marie Jones, Teresa de Lauretis, Elizabeth Kuti and Marina Carr, both public and private space are alluded to as locations of entrapment and displacement.

While *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women* is a true celebration of women's theatre, a number of questions arise in relation to the plays discussed in the book. The study uses a clear theoretical framework for the analysis of the plays, but the extensive use of this framework leaves no room for the author to evaluate biographical information relating to the playwrights she considers. For instance, three out of the four Gregory plays analysed in the book – *Dervorgilla, Kincora, Grania* – are the playwright's most autobiographical works. Therefore, it cannot be argued with certainty that Gregory's sole intention with these plays was to refute the patriarchal discourse of Irish nationalism. Gregory's biographer, Elizabeth Coxhead, found that it was the playwright's inner conflicts that were dramatised in these plays in order to address some of the emotional struggles of her past.* Gregory was a prominent member of the Protestant Ascendancy class and these plays contain her comments on Ascendancy culture as a whole during the period of the Irish cultural revival. This is an important point also in relation to Yeats's plays. It is argued in the book that the figure of the Countess Cathleen "embodies the landowner and the sacrificial martyr" in order to symbolise the nation (6). This point is highly problematic, especially as the work is then compared to one of Yeats's last plays, *Purgatory*. In both plays Yeats specifically considers the fate of the Protestant Ascendancy

class. In *The Countess Cathleen* he employs the Faustian trope to highlight the doomed nature of the countess's intention to offer herself as an aristocratic sacrifice to demons in order to ensure the salvation of the 'lower' souls of the peasantry. In *Purgatory* (1938) the playwright laments the loss of the Big House culture following the Irish War of Independence in 1919–21 and the Irish Civil War of 1922–23, which destroyed many Protestant Ascendancy homes previously functioning as custodians of high art. It would have been interesting to see some analysis of less overtly biographical plays by these dramatists, such as *The Image, The Full Moon* or *Hyacinth Halvey* by Lady Gregory and *The Pot of Broth* or *The Land of Heart's Desire* by Yeats, in order to discover the true nature of their representation of Irish women.

The inclusion of *Grania* in the long list of plays discussed in the first chapter of the book brings to the fore another problematic issue. Uneasy about the strongly biographical nature of her play, Gregory refused to let it be produced in her lifetime. The question arising here is that of reception. What is the relationship between text and audience? To what extent is it possible for a play to challenge or subvert socially accepted norms of representing womanhood if the play lacks a receptive audience? Other Gregory plays enjoyed a much wider popular appeal and were produced more often – especially *Spreading the News* and *Hyacinth Halvey*. Would not her peasant plays be more certain indicators of the playwright's success (or perhaps, failure) to subvert canonised representations of Irish women on stage? The question of audience is relevant in relation to many of the authors discussed by Kurdi in the book. It is by no means possible to give detailed accounts of productions in a book which focuses on gender theory and modern drama, but some information about the reception of the lesser known plays, especially those of Elizabeth Kuti, Miriam Gallagher or Theresa de Lauretis, could have helped support Kurdi's claim about these playwrights' intention to change the course of twentieth-century Irish drama.

Talking of audience, the case of Marina Carr is most striking. Carr is one of the most successful playwrights of the post-1990 era, whose plays appeal to wide audiences both in and outside Ireland. In line with contemporary critical trends in gender studies, Kurdi claims that by representing Irish women as sexually liberated, violent and agnostic, who care for no man or religion, Carr and other contemporary female artists manage to free their female characters from "the traditional masculine narrative of nation building" (41). While the latter argument seems valid, is it not the case that male playwrights of the same period, Martin McDonagh for instance, were trying to do the same? Is it not the case that in an Ireland exposed to the vicissitudes

of transnational liberal capitalism McDonagh reinforced the century-long portrayal of the Irish male as violent as he was trying to construct an alternative image to the self-confident, economy-focused Irishmen of the Celtic Tiger period? As far as women playwrights' depiction of violent and abusive women on stage is concerned, were these female playwrights not following in the footsteps of male dramatists? How much room is left to argue that female playwrights were doing something radically distinctive in Irish theatre; or, how far might it be the case that they merely continued to adhere to masculine narratives imposed upon Irish literature by their male contemporaries? The commercial value of theatre comes into play here. It would be interesting to continue the investigations initiated by Patrick Lonergan in *Theatre and Globalisation: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) to find out the extent to which the choices made by Irish male and female dramatists during and after the Celtic Tiger period were conditioned by issues of the global market appeal of a distinctive Irish theatre product. Is it possible to argue that Irish female playwrights "turned violent" in order to sell their plays in the theatre, against the backdrop of a general adjustment in the cultural representation of violence in western society during the nineties, which stemmed from the movies of Quentin Tarantino and the widespread commercial success they enjoyed? Could the graphic representation of violence be a major factor in the commercial success of some of these plays, including those of Marina Carr? More particularly, how far does *The Bog of Cats* pander to the ridiculing of the so-called 'white trash' culture that spread globally from the United States of America during the 1990s (through the medium of mainstream television products such as *The Jerry Springer Show*), under the guise of Carr interrogating feminine identity in contemporary Ireland? More detailed analysis of production history and the context of a globalised Irish society in the Celtic Tiger era would be required to illuminate the issue.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, Mária Kurdi's *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women* is a thought-provoking and very valuable contribution to the study of Irish literature. The author engages with gender criticism in a convincing manner and provides detailed analyses of plays written by twentieth-century Irish women. Given the depth of the author's engagement with contemporary critical material and the reader friendliness of the phrasing, the book is to be warmly recommended for both academics and students of Irish literature.

Eglantina Remport

Note

*Elizabeth Coxhead, *Lady Gregory, a Literary Portrait* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), pp. 146–47.

Back to Trauma and Beyond

Stanislav Kolář, Katarína Šandorová & Zuzana Buráková, *Reflections of Trauma in Selected Works of Postwar American and British Literature* (Košice: Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, 2010)

Trauma studies are an interdisciplinary field of humanities, which emerged as a distinct subdiscipline approximately in the late 1990s. The recent Slovak collection, *Reflections of Trauma in Selected Works of Postwar American and British Literature*, offers an excellent introduction to this relatively new branch of studies, followed by analyses of relevant American and British literary works. The book is not only cutting-edge but also very lucid and well-structured, including theory and practice in appropriate proportions, covering some of the most traditional themes such as the Holocaust as well as applying the term "trauma" to less evident subjects like lesbian fiction. However, the book may seem somewhat uneven due to differences in quality between the essays; a problem which could probably have been resolved with more attentive editorial support. Despite certain questionable passages, this publication of the Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice provides English and American studies in Central Europe with a valuable and useful handbook, bringing into focus some new possible ways of interpretation.

The rapid career of trauma studies might be the result of their highly pragmatic approach; the lack of which is such a frequent charge against the humanities. The key concepts of trauma theories, as we understand them now, are rooted in the works of psychologists a century ago. The most substantial of them were Sigmund Freud's two essays, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (1914) and "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), but similar ideas and sometimes alternative terminologies were also developed by his colleagues and competitors. It was primarily the shocks of World War I that led to their diagnosis of "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD), which occurs when actual experiences are "so overwhelming that they cannot be integrated into existing mental frameworks" (9), resulting in the belatedness of response to the trauma, repression, repetition compulsion and other memory dysfunctions, leading ultimately to the possible breach of one's integrity. Similar symptoms were observed later in several further patients with apparently different problems and background stories. However, it was not until towards the end of the millennium that these observations started to be applied to a wide range of phenomena by professionals in a variety of fields: not only psychologists but also historians, sociologists, literary scholars and others. A further significant shift is that while Freud's emphasis was on the mental disorders and the possible treatment of individuals, current re-

search tends to apply the terminology to trauma-afflicted communities as well. Trauma theories have proved to be valid for such diverse situations as natural catastrophes, war, sexual abuse or socially oppressed minorities, moreover, these recognitions offer effective conceptual frameworks for coping practically with these highly problematic cases. It is therefore no wonder that within two decades the new transdisciplinary branch of humanities has already established its own journals, research centres and university workshops offering master's and postgraduate degrees.

Stanislav Kolář's general "Introduction" to the collection is written in a suitably pragmatic way. In about a dozen pages he succeeds in informing the reader both about the most essential ideas of trauma studies and the structure of the book that he co-authored. After a very brief summary of the etymological and historical background of the new subdiscipline, he gives a concise but thorough survey of its key concepts, primarily relying on the work of Dominick LaCapra and Cathy Caruth, but also referring to other opinions, supported by a useful bibliography of convenient length. These few pages are so clear and so comprehensive that they could be recommended to anyone taking their first steps in the field of trauma studies; they might be especially useful, for instance, for university course reading lists. Kolař not only explains basic terminology but also makes refined distinctions which point towards productive perspectives in the application of trauma theories. He does so while outlining the structure of the book, clarifying the relations between the themes and views of the succeeding essays. Conspicuously, the governing principle of the collection is to move from the concept of historical toward structural trauma, as LaCapra coined the terms in his substantial *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001): "The traumatizing events in historical trauma can be determined . . . while structural trauma . . . is not an event but an anxiety-producing condition of possibility related to the potential for historical traumatization" (82). Accordingly, the current collection first addresses narratives of specific, extreme historical events, then examines the inter- and transgenerational consequences of such situations, finally arriving at such examples for structural trauma present in everyday society which threaten one's identity in more elusive but also more permanent ways than isolated occurrences of violence.

The first two chapters are also written by Kolař. In "Trauma and the Holocaust in the American Novel" he compares five canonical pieces of American Holocaust fiction: *The Pawnbroker* by Edward Lewis Wallant, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* by Saul Bellow, *Sophie's Choice* by William Clark Styron, *The Shawl* by Cynthia Ozick and *Maus* by Art Spiegelman; and two further novels representing the same issues from the point of view of second- and third-generation survivors: *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan

Safran Foer, and *The World to Come* by Dara Horn. This complex survey is followed by a shorter analysis, "Nuclear Holocaust and Trauma: John Hersey's *Hiroshima*" focusing on one documentary, a book of interviews made by Hersey with six survivors of the atomic bomb. The next study, "Finding Identity through Trauma" returns to issues connected to Jewish identity; its author, Zuzana Buráková, approaches *Everything is Illuminated* once again, now from a different angle, and discusses two further, also very recent books, a collection of short stories called *There are Jews in My House* by Lara Vapnyar and a novel, *Absurdistan*, by Gary Shteyngart. Finally, Katarína Šandorová takes a sharp turn and applies the notion of structural trauma to three contemporary lesbian novels: *Tipping the Velvet* by Sarah Waters, *A Village Affair* by Joanna Trollop and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson. The whole endeavour is neatly rounded off by the collectively signed "Conclusion" of the three authors. The first, third and fourth compositions are also supplied with their own brief introductions and conclusions, which are well justified by the complexity of the subjects. This carefully organized and transparent structure, including proportionate bibliographies at the end of each section, makes the book not only a pleasant read but also a user-friendly source of further references. I wondered, however, whether a different sequence – placing the two Jewish-related essays next to each other – might not have been more logical, particularly since they are thematically overlapping (regarding the trans- and intergenerational aspects of trauma, and the novel *Everything is Illuminated* in particular). But current trauma studies are so principally rooted in and closely linked to Holocaust studies that it was undoubtedly correct to start such a heterogeneous collection with Stanislav Kolař's study, especially as it is also the most extensive paper in the book; and then it seems reasonable to keep his contribution, the first three major chapters together. I found it more disturbing that especially in the second half of the book there are numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes. Such a professional collection would have deserved one more round of careful proofreading, which could have easily eliminated not only cases of mistaken word order or misused prepositions but obviously misprinted segments as well. In addition, it could have also called the authors' attention to a few questionably phrased statements, such as "Suicide is perhaps not the most fulfilling method of resolving trauma" (76). Perhaps not perhaps.

The first essay by Stanislav Kolář gives a complex and profound analysis of the survivor syndrome as represented in seven illustrative pieces of American Holocaust fiction. It seems proper that the first, longer part is devoted to, by now, classical stories recording the post-war American lives of survivors, while the last of these five books, Spiegelman's

graphic novel, provides a bridge to the second, shorter section examining inter- and transgenerational effects of trauma addressed by two examples of 21st-century fiction. This arrangement not only offers the reader a good overall picture, but also points out the topicality of these issues. Kolář poses the relevant questions of authenticity and of ensuing difficulties in literary representations of the Holocaust (11–13), also considering whether Holocaust fiction is to be treated as a specific subgenre (21). Then he investigates each of his chosen seven books from the point of view of PTSD, tracing the ways in which trauma blocked communication between characters; how repressed memories return in forms of involuntary flashbacks, nightmares and other mental disorders; and how these phenomena affect the special challenges, possibilities and solutions of narrative strategies in Holocaust fiction. Illuminating references are made to the problematic issues of "universalizing the experience of the Holocaust" (32) and the "Shoah business" (43). The author also makes sensitive distinctions between diverse types of traumas and the differences in their representations, for instance the Holocaust versus the mother's suicide in *Maus* (40–41), or the modification of effects and responses through generations.

His next chapter, on the reportage about Hiroshima, is not only much shorter but also less literary. He provides ample information on the circumstances under which Hersey's book was written and paraphrases much of the personal stories told in it – which leaves relatively little space for reflections, at least compared to the analyses in the previous section. The other possible reason for the change might be that in contrast to the first chapter, here Kolař investigates not a work of fiction but a documentary. Therefore he concentrates not so much on the ways of verbal representation as on the psychological aspects of survivors' testimonies. Consequently, the reader learns a lot about what happened in Hiroshima and how it afflicted the lives and psyches of its inhabitants, but in respect of theoretical conclusions this chapter may seem slightly less rewarding than the previous pages.

The most exciting feature of Buráková's essay is her choice of subject: she reinvestigates the well-researched aspects of Jewish identity, memory and the relationships between generations in three lately published, hence less widely known books. Each was written in the 21st century, but the first presents a double plot with a contemporary plotline leading to the discovery of a traumatic background story at the time of the Holocaust (*Everything Is Illuminated*); the title story of the second book takes place during World War II (*There Are Jews in My House*); while the last novel leads the reader to a contemporary setting (*Absurdistan*). Foer's novel demonstrates how the understanding of family histories adds to the maturation of its young protagonists; and, in return, how their working through family traumas might also prevent the

wounds from being passed on to the next generations. The first of Vapnyar's stories discussed here tells of a Gentile woman betraying her Jewish friend in a borderline situation; while the other one illustrates how Antisemitism might work even in an apparently innocent kindergarten environment. Buráková seems to be more successful in applying trauma theories to Foer's novel than to the otherwise well-selected short stories. Although she introduces Maria Root's notion of "insidious trauma" (80) and follows sensitively how one of Vapnyar's protagonists "gradually changes from a witness of the traumas . . . into a perpetrator" (85), the rest of her text might give the impression of an unnecessarily lengthy retelling of the story instead of an acute analysis.

I also found Buráková's interpretation of *Absurdistan* problematic. The common feature of this novel and the previous stories is its Jewish protagonist, Misha, who moves from Russia to the US; and there is also trauma, namely, the childhood abuse to which his father subjected him. However, I cannot altogether agree with Buráková's oversimplifying claim that "[h]is molestation, obesity and Jewishness are the traumas which Misha must deal with" (91). She seems to neglect absolutely the satirical-political dimension of the novel, although the title *Absurdistan* clearly highlights that this is one of Shteyngart's primary concerns. "Absurdistan" was a name used for countries of the Eastern Bloc, especially for Czechoslovakia in the 1970's and 1980's, for example by Czech playwright and later president Václav Havel or in the title of the collection of essays by Slovakian citizen and Hungarian writer Lajos Grendel; and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the term was transferred to authoritarian states still under Russian influence, like Belarus or Turkmenistan. Taking into account the title as well as the plot and some of the satirically exaggerated symbols, I doubt whether the central trauma in the book is really the Jewish inheritance of the protagonist. I would rather suggest that Shteyngart brings the collapse of the political systems in the region just as much into the foreground; moreover, the historical interaction of the two traumas may deserve some further investigation. Also, Misha's spectacular obesity and his father's abusive behaviour do not appear as exclusively psychological factors to be understood realistically but also as metaphors for the excessive former power of the USSR and its burden on its descendants. So while on the one hand I strongly approve of Buráková's calling the reader's attention to this excellent novel, on the other hand I would have appreciated a more comprehensive approach to the subject.

Šandorová suggests in the last chapter that oppressive public opinion can function just as well as a traumatizing factor as distinct, violent events. She comes to this conclusion reading three novels at the intersection of lesbian studies and trauma theories. Here, the problems are similar to the ones I mentioned in the

previous two sections. Just like her colleague, she sets out to explore new and promising grounds, proving her point convincingly in respect of the first novel. Following the heroine's fate in *Tipping the Velvet*, we can see how she is traumatized by the oppression of 19th-century public opinion rejecting the very idea of a lesbian identity; how her inability to integrate her experiences into the available conceptual frameworks leads to her devastation; and how, in the end, working through her life story with the help of an enlightened feminist companion helps her to regain her integrity and to reach a sense of private fulfilment in spite of all the practical difficulties which the couple will still have to face. The succeeding part on *A Village Affair*, however, does not seem to add much to our understanding of trauma; on the contrary, I have doubts as to whether it should be read as a trauma story at all. Of course, it tells about an unhappy lesbian relationship – in this case, between a married woman with three children and a young woman – but I disagree with interpreting *any* crucial negative experience in one's life as a trauma. The protagonist has to face the dilemma of choosing between her family and her female lover; she takes all factors and opinions into consideration; and finally makes the decision to leave both her husband and her lover; thus gaining custody of her children. This is undoubtedly a sad story but it does not go beyond the protagonist's comprehension, it does not confuse her sense of time or her memory, the failure of the lesbian couple's love is due not to communication gaps or repressed feelings but simply to the rational decision of a mother preferring her children to her lover – to cut it short, Šandorová might not have pointed out clearly enough which elements render the story traumatic. Likewise, the section on *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* would appeal more to the reader if the paraphrasing of the plot were reduced, leaving more space to explain why the book is a relevant and illuminating subject of trauma studies.

To sum up, *Reflections of Trauma in Selected Works* seems to be a successfully realized project. Its two principal and unquestionable merits are that it provides its readers with a very pragmatic and useful general introduction to trauma studies on the one hand, and, on the other, it applies possible broader interpretations of the relevant terms to current examples of literature. This second goal, however, might have deserved further elaboration, for the chapters investigating familiar fields are fully accomplished, while the ones trying to break new ground may sound sometimes less satisfying. But that can be tolerated as the almost inevitable fate of pioneers, since in spite of its few disputable points, the book unquestionably provides an excellent summary of trauma studies as well as a promising start pointing towards new directions in the field.

Katalin Szlukovényi

Crossing Disciplines

Tamás Juhász, *Conradian Contracts: Exchange and Identity in the Immigrant Imagination* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011)

The publication of Tamás Juhász's recent monograph is an important event in Joseph Conrad studies (and, more generally, in English studies) in Hungary. In fact, *Conradian Contracts* is the first full-length critical study of Conrad by a Hungarian scholar that I am aware of, not counting Aladár Sarbu's introductory book, *Joseph Conrad világa* [Joseph Conrad's World], written for a Hungarian audience and published back in 1974. Juhász's study, however, has nothing to do with the (or *a*) Hungarian reception of Conrad. Published in the United States, it belongs firmly – and also in more profound ways – to the line of works produced by international Conrad scholarship in the last few decades. In terms of its heavy reliance on post-structural theory, *Conradian Contracts* is akin to books such as William W. Bonney's *Thorns & Arabesques: Contexts for Conrad's Fiction* (1980), Bruce Henricksen's *Nomadic Voices: Conrad and the Subject of Narrative* (1992) or Geoffrey Galt Harpham's *One of Us: The Mastery of Joseph Conrad* (1996). As far as its thematic focus on aspects of commerce is concerned, Juhász's book calls to mind especially the recent work of Andrew Francis on commerce in Conrad's Asian fiction.[1] But what sets this study apart from the wealth of books on Conrad already published is its specific interdisciplinary character.

To develop his complex argument, Juhász draws on and integrates an impressive variety of theories, and indeed it is difficult either to categorize his approach or to summarize that argument with precision. The author himself defines the aim of his study as the examination of "the ways in which the novelist's characters make . . . efforts to have their displaced selves recognized and accepted by the community from which they are barred" (ix–x). The central assumption is that Conrad is interested in characters who are either actual foreigners, or whose position within their native community is, in a psychological and sociological sense, marginal. In order to overcome their sense of isolation, these characters, Juhász argues, seek recognition by and (re-)integration into some home or social formation through exchange mechanisms that include not just commerce in the narrow sense of the term, but also "[v]erbal or emotional responsiveness, companionate presence, or even mere visual recognition" (x). Within this interpretative framework, Conrad's displaced characters are seen as having no choice but to accept the social contract that entails such gains, however disadvantageous in other ways and morally questionable the contract may be (xi). While the book under review here focuses on Conrad's fiction, the concluding chapter extends

the examination of the link between various forms of exchange and exile to other authors as well. In this concise but illuminating conclusion, which apparently contains the seeds of Juhász's next book (see p. 219), he looks briefly at Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet* (1982) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* (2000), three other stories with ethnically and culturally displaced characters at their centre.

I have already touched upon the fact that Juhász's approach is an interesting and bold combination of theories from various disciplines; most notably, he combines psychoanalysis, anthropology and economic history. As he remarks in a perhaps unnecessarily apologetic tone in the Preface (xi), he has found inspiration in and is going to draw especially on the work of thinkers as diverse as Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Karl Polanyi, Jacques Lacan, Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida and Louis Althusser. Of these, it is the work of Lacan that serves as the most consistent point of reference, with several Lacanian concepts, among them those more directly related to exchange (such as *demand* or *Debt*), featuring prominently throughout the study. As opposed to anthropology and economic history, ideas from psychoanalysis have of course often and systematically been applied in both Conrad criticism and biography before. Psychoanalytic Conrad criticism goes back to a long tradition hallmarked by such early but important names as Gustav Morf, Albert J. Guerard, Bernard C. Meyer and Frederick R. Karl. Within that diverse tradition, critics have taken several different routes of investigation. The one that Juhász has followed in much of his book is, in the words of Barbara Johnson and Marjorie Garber, a reading of the literary text "*as a theory of a symptom or complex*," an inquiry into "the text's psychoanalytic *knowledge*."[2] Juhász's primary aim is not therefore to analyse the psyche of the biographical person Joseph Conrad through his fiction, but to examine Conrad's understanding and dramatization of how certain psychological, cultural and economic factors are interrelated. This I find highly commendable on several grounds, not least because Juhász is at his best when it comes to close readings; his brief digression at one point into biographical territory seems somehow out of place in this fine study of Conradian fiction (21–23).

At the same time, however, an examination of the text's psychoanalytic knowledge also carries some problematic if unintended implications. Some of Juhász's readings posit a Conrad who is far more theoretically oriented than we have reason to believe he was on the basis of his correspondence and other documentary evidence – so much so that at times Juhász appears to suggest Conrad himself must have been something of a poststructuralist theorist. Certainly, this is a problem with many poststructuralist readings of Conrad, as is a dense, abstract style that also character-

ises *Conradian Contracts*: "Unlike in 'The End of the Tether,' visual attractions in 'Youth' facilitate no irrevocable backsliding into speechlessness, yet the pleasant visual reciprocities threaten the premature demise of both the dialogic narrative act and the progression from port to destination" (32). Although Juhász's command of English is impressive, sentences such as the above detract considerably from the readability of his study. Still on a critical note, I wonder why the author does not quote from the already published volumes of the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad (1990–), which is the only reliable, scholarly edition of Conrad available. It may of course be for reasons of copyright that the much older Dent Collected Edition (1946–1955) is preferred throughout the study; yet, in this context, it seems inconsistent that Juhász does at the same time quote from *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, also published by Cambridge University Press (1983–2008).

As mentioned above, this book's strength lies in its strong and challenging interpretations of individual Conrad works. Yet, before I go on to give some successful examples of close reading, I would like to voice two further, and final, critical concerns. The first is that, occasionally, Juhász insists a little too much on interpreting Conrad's works from the specific perspective he has chosen to adopt, which results in overreading. Not everyone, for example, will agree with the suggestion that in *Nostromo*, Decoud's death is caused mainly by the "absence of an agreement," the "disappearance of a social consensus that could define the value of [the silver] treasure" with which he is stranded alone on the Great Isabel island (162). My second concern is that the validity of some controversial readings is, as it were, taken for granted, without these readings being properly tested against more widespread critical views on the subject. When, for instance, the author argues that in "Typhoon," the first mate Jukes "is hypnotically drawn to MacWhirr's [the captain's] body," I would like to see more textual evidence of such arguable "impulses of homosexuality" in the story (63). This would be all the more important as, to my knowledge, no such argument has been put forward before; not even Richard Ruppel's full-length study of homosexuality in Conrad's fiction makes any reference to "Typhoon" in particular.[3]

Generally, however, Juhász's close attention to detail produces fine readings. The intellectual rigour and consistency with which he conducts his analyses, and the fact that these analyses never turn into self-serving theorizations, are admirable, given especially how diverse are the critical theories on which he draws. I have found his section on "The Secret Sharer" and the chapters on *The Secret Agent*, *Nostromo* and *Chance* to be the most insightful overall. There is a sense in which Juhász's approach, with its focus on commerce and other exchange mechanisms, is most appropri-

ate to the gloomy, coldly calculating world of Conrad's London novel. It works very well to describe the various "transactions" involving both commodities and human beings that are conducted by the secret agent Adolf Verloc and other characters. But Juhász is also particularly good on the character of Nostromo. Most importantly, he introduces the concept of *potlatch* to illuminate Nostromo's deep embeddedness in the local society and its culture. Relying mainly on Georges Bataille's work, Juhász defines potlatch as an archaic form of tribal trade which centres around "a combined process of feasting and gift giving, during which large quantities of property are distributed," the primary aim of the overly generous contenders being in fact to acquire a higher social status and prestige (165–166). The notion that Nostromo practices potlatch adds an interesting facet to his character and helps explain his initial and compulsive need for appreciation as well as his eventual and fatal infatuation with the silver.

With *Conradian Contracts*, the author has produced a valuable contribution to Conrad studies both nationally and internationally. It is important for scholarship coming from Hungary to have an international presence, and Juhász's study is one of those books that will very likely make their presence felt outside the borders as well. It will do so mainly by virtue of its boldly interdisciplinary approach and its strong readings of individual Conrad works. This book is certainly not without deficiencies, yet the overall impression is of a carefully argued and rigorous exploration of complex and as yet hardly studied interrelationships in the fiction of this great novelist. If it is true that the humanities are becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, then surely the publication of *Conradian Contracts* is timely and may encourage similar studies to be written in the future.

Balázs Csizmadia

Notes

1. See Andrew Francis, "Recovering the Ethics of Economic Botany in Conrad's Asian Fiction," *The Conradian* 34.2 (2009) 75–89, and his " 'You always leave us – for your own ends': Marriage and Concubinage in Conrad's Asian Fiction," *The Conradian* 35.2 (2010) 46–62. Francis's work, however, is not theoretically oriented but rather has a documentary character, based as it is on extensive archival research.

2. Barbara Johnson and Marjorie Garber, "Secret Sharing: Reading Conrad Psychoanalytically," *College English* 49.6 (Psychoanalysis and Pedagogy I) (1987) 628–640, p. 630; emphases in original.

3. See Richard J. Ruppel, *Homosexuality in the Life and Work of Joseph Conrad: Love between the Lines* (New York: Routledge, 2008).